

THE LIFE OF
CHARLES HADDON
SPURGEON


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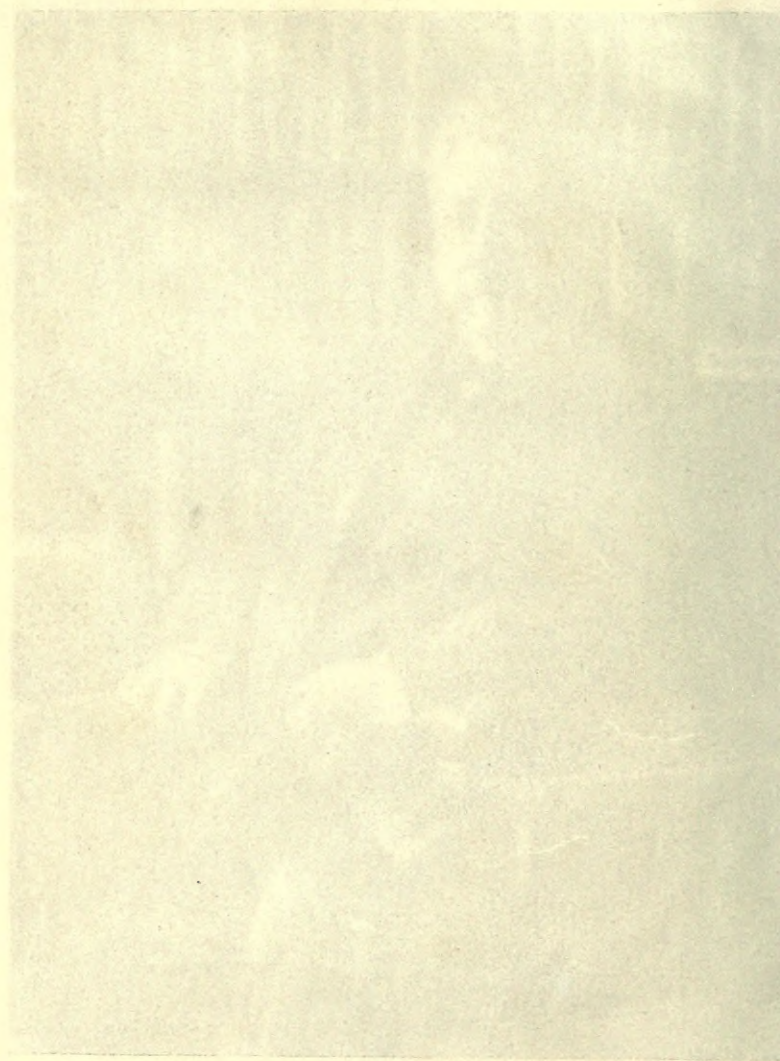


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CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON.



CHARLES HADSON PIERCE
(LONDON: 1871)

THE LIFE OF
CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

BY
CHARLES RAY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY
PASTOR THOMAS SPURGEON.

LONDON
PASSMORE AND ALABASTER
PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS E.C.
ISBISTER AND COMPANY LIMITED
15 & 16 TAVISTOCK ST. COVENT GARDEN

1903.

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DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
THE LATE
MRS. C. H. SPURGEON,
WHO SINCE THE WRITING
OF THIS BIOGRAPHY
HAS GONE TO
JOIN HER HUSBAND.

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PREFACE.

IT is not easy in the compass of a single volume to give anything like a fair idea of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's life and work. Indeed his activities were so manifold, and the channels in which his energies were exerted were so numerous, that the biographer is bewildered by the very mass of material at his disposal. The great divine's connection with all the organisations and institutions that owed their inception and growth to his untiring efforts, was so intimate that the history of any one of them would be the history of a single phase of C. H. Spurgeon's life. Hence to give a full and clear idea of the preacher's organising ability alone, would require as many volumes as there are agencies connected with the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Then, his wonderful ministry in London was so vast in its conception and results, that to tell it fully would need many volumes the size of this one, whilst the story of his preaching engagements away from London would fill another book. And so the story might be multiplied until a whole library were brought into existence, without the fear of the minute detail engendering dulness.

That Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a wonderful man, those with only a slight knowledge of his life will readily agree, but few who were not in close contact with him for many years, have any idea how wonderful he was. In the following pages an attempt has been made not only to tell something of what he did, but to convey some idea of what he was—his sterling character, his unflinching courage, his tireless energy, his mountain-moving faith, his personal piety,

his unexampled generosity, his lack of anything approaching selfishness, his unquenchable zeal, his marvellous ability, and his persistent and consistent Christianity. If "the evil that men do lives after them" so does the good, and in C. H. Spurgeon's case it must ever live.

The writer has laid down his pen with regret. But he has been helped during the preparation of this biography by learning afresh the fact that mighty men of faith are not the production of a bygone day only, but that in this utilitarian and materialistic age, it is possible for a man to literally fulfil the apostle's words: "For me to live is Christ."

The marvellous growth in circulation of the printed sermons has been dealt with at some length and the story has been continued to the present time, for, as the motto on the weekly cover, "He being dead yet speaketh," suggests, these sermons prove that though "absent from the body" C. H. Spurgeon is still a silent worker for righteousness. Paradoxical as it may seem the record of his life by no means stops at his death.

Some new material and many hitherto unpublished illustrations will be found in this volume. For the former the writer gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster and the Rev. C. Evelyn Charlesworth, Baptist Minister of Waterbeach, and for the latter to Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, the Rev. Vernon J. Charlesworth, headmaster of the Stockwell Orphanage, Mr. Edward Johnson and others.

One word in conclusion. This biography is not a piece of special pleading by one of C. H. Spurgeon's own denomination. The writer belongs to a body with which the great preacher had, ecclesiastically, no sympathy and of which at times he said some rather hard things.

INTRODUCTION.

BY PASTOR THOMAS SPURGEON.

LATE in the fifties the SS. "Omeo" ploughed her way through the Southern Seas, in the track of a recent storm. She was bound from Melbourne to New Zealand, with a goodly passenger list. Waves are waves in those latitudes, even when they do not run mountains high; and though the wind had subsided, there was still commotion enough on the water. Consequently, there were not a few empty places at the dinner table. Only a few "good sailors" gathered at the Captain's end of the saloon. So proof were these seasoned travellers against *mal de mer*, that they not only did full justice to a somewhat elaborate meal, but, seeing that the night was dark and cold, they continued chatting and jesting over their dessert. All kinds of topics were discussed—the weather, of course, the probable length of the voyage, the politics of Victoria and of New Zealand, farming prospects, the price of land, the play, and last of all religion, or, more accurately, the professors and preachers of it.

Just then the world was ringing with the fame of one—*Spurgeon*, quite a youth, who had taken London by storm, and was making friends and foes at an altogether unprecedented rate. All the dessert-eaters had heard of him, though not one of their number had had opportunity of hearing him. They were disposed to swell the number of his critics, almost without exception, and some among them were specially severe. For a while there was none to

champion his cause, but there was a silent member sitting by,—a canny Scot who knew how to “bide a wee.”

It should be known that at this time, all sorts of wild tales were abroad. Dame Rumour was specially talkative, and inventive. Some of her most remarkable creations survive to this day, so hard do such fabrications die. But in the days of which I write they were young, and vigorous. Moreover, by the time they reached the Antipodes they were yarns indeed.

“The flying rumours gathered as they rolled,
Scarce any tale was sooner heard than told;
And all who heard it added something new,
And all who told it made enlargements too;
On every ear it spread, on every tongue it grew.”

Thus lie after lie was bandied about, and there were few who knew the truth, and fewer still who dared to tell it.

The voyagers did not hesitate to run the young preacher down. He was an upstart, a nine days’ wonder, a mountebank, an ignoramus, and worse. The Scot still sat silent. But his blood was beginning to boil.

At length he lifted his stalwart form, standing six feet in his stockings, and with a visage stern and strong, he addressed his fellow-travellers in some such words as these:—“Gentlemen, I have listened with painful interest to your denunciations of a great and good man. I note that none of you has seen or heard him, and I am bound to say that such sweeping condemnation of the absent strikes me as being most unfair. I myself, alas! have never listened to the preacher, but I have read many of his utterances, and I have carefully studied his character as they reveal it. I do not hesitate to declare my conviction that he is an honest, and true man. Moreover, I am persuaded that he

is a God-sent preacher. The Spirit of God rests upon him, and works through him. He neither fears the frown of man, nor courts his favour. He is possessed, in my judgment, of surprising gifts, and they are all consecrated to the service of God and man. You have said that he is unlearned and ignorant. True, he has not received a university education; but he is by no means ignorant. They said of his Master, 'Whence hath this man letters, having never learned?' I verily believe that C. H. Spurgeon is taught of God, and has been specially equipped by the Holy Spirit. His sermons prove very plainly that he is the reverse of uninformed. I have studied them. They are truly eloquent, as well as deeply spiritual. Portions of them have found an abiding-place in my memory, and, though I fear I may mar the message if I attempt to reproduce it, I will venture to quote one passage, and you yourselves shall be the judges as to whether a mere mountebank could talk like that by the hour together, week after week:—

“ ‘O, young man, build thy studio on Calvary! There raise thine observatory, and scan by faith the lofty things of Nature. Take thee a hermit's cell in the Garden of Gethsemane, and lave thy brow with the waters of Siloa. Let the Bible be thy standard classic—thy last appeal in all matters of contention. Let its light be thine illumination, and thou shalt become more wise than Plato; more truly learned than the seven sages of antiquity.’ ”

An ominous silence fell on the company when the reciter resumed his seat. His astonished hearers looked each on the other, and without remark retired. To their credit be it said that there were some among them who came, a little later, to C. H. Spurgeon's champion, to express their regret that they had spoken so ill of a man whom they knew not,

and of whom they would henceforth be prepared to think better things.

Now, these things were done in the days wherein C. H. Spurgeon, although already well known, was little understood. His detractors were greatly prejudiced, and sadly ill-informed. They did not judge righteous judgment, deciding often—like the “Omeo’s” passengers—by hearsay only. It was well that in those early days there were found some to speak a good word for the Lord’s servant, and boldly to challenge the false witnesses and mischief-makers. God does not leave His faithful ambassadors without a body-guard of heart-touched men. Not a few of those who espoused the cause of the persecuted preacher had not seen him, but they had been fed and fired by his discourses, as reproduced in the Press. They delighted in the doctrines which he proclaimed so unhesitatingly and forcefully. They rejoiced in his whole-hearted devotion to the cause of God; they admired his unique talents; and they divined that he was a man sent of God to rouse the sleeping churches, and to “take” many men for Christ.

C. H. Spurgeon paid little heed to criticism. While the dogs were baying, the moon continued shining. He knew his cause was righteous, and he kept his conscience void of offence alike towards God and man. Nevertheless, his spirit was often wounded sore, and he welcomed very gratefully the succour and sympathy of the loving hearts and sanctified intellects which counted it their glory to share his shame. How well I remember the tears of thankful joy that glistened in his eyes when first he heard the incident related above. He wished to know at once who his champion was, and, had it been possible, he would, I am sure, have grasped the hand of such a Jonathan with one of his never-to-be-forgotten “God-bless-yous.”

In later days there was little need to tell of the preacher's fame, or to sing his praise. He had lived down detraction, and had transformed many a foe into a friend. Into almost every corner of the globe his sermons had penetrated, and his name had become a household word in every clime.

I do remember meeting with one person who had not heard his name, but that poor old Irish woman in one of the long disused convict-stations of Tasmania was as much cut off from Protestant Church history by her Roman Catholicism, as the place in which she dwelt was from civilization, by its geographical position. I have found the name of Spurgeon not only recognised, but greatly respected, on either side of the world. The Colonial Custom-House officer was lenient as to the luggage when he read the name SPURGEON on the label. The inevitable question, "Any relation of the great preacher?" being answered satisfactorily, most doors flew open, and all hearts grew warm towards the young traveller. Many an opportunity have I had of hearing striking testimony concerning my dear father from some who had not the remotest idea that I was a son of his. I recall some of this witness as I write. There is the old gardener, leaning on his spade in the centre of the garden-plot, exclaiming with the authority of a Scribe, and the triumph of a Cæsar,—"**SPURGEON!** *Ah, there was no humbug about him!*" I hear one of the rowers in the ferry-boat saying to his mate as they pull across the stream, "Oh, but you should ha' heard his father. Why man, he made one's hair stand on end!" I remember the broken English of the Maori local preacher who had read "John Ploughman's Talk":—"I say, it was very wonderful. He told every things: animal, bird, and many of them. He must full of readings of lots book. He must have had a very big head full of wisdom. I should think he was very

close to Solomon." I catch the quavering accents of the aged saint who, though he had never seen the Preacher's face, assured me that he loved my father even better than his own. I call to mind the little lass who in her heart believed that C. H. Spurgeon was the Prime Minister, and I hear the softened tones of the strong-voiced fisherman who was sounding forth the gospel on the beach, when he quoted from "dear old Spurgeon." As there pass before my mind's eye the multitudes who have grasped my hand with special heartiness, and the saints—not a few of them bed-ridden—who have murmured a blessing on my head, "for your dear father's sake," I ask myself, "Was there ever a man more widely or more deeply loved?" Those who knew him best, wonder least at this. So rare a combination of lovable qualities could hardly fail to secure affection, even in this cold and careless age. God had so richly dowered him, and he used these gifts so manifestly for God's glory; he was so utterly unselfish, so genial, so human, and yet so faithful and uncompromising, that even unbelievers were forced to exclaim, "This is a good man and true." They were wont to say that he was better than his creed, little knowing how closely allied were his deeds and his creed.

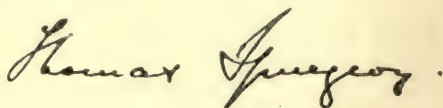
He has been away from us—"at home with the Lord"—for nearly a dozen years. They said truly who declared that his loss was irreparable. The gap his departure made seems larger every year. It speaks volumes for the stability of his work, that his power is felt, and his Institutions thrive unto this present. His own literary works, published before and since his death, form quite a considerable library. His sermons are still appearing week by week, together with the running comment which is hardly less valuable than the discourse itself. The living voice can hardly die away into

silence so long as these sweet echoes last. The best of all is that these sermons seem as potent as those that went before. As the bones of the deceased prophet brought life to the dead, so these posthumous discourses are used of God to minister the saving grace of spiritual life to their readers. The Jubilee of "The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit" is at hand. Fifty years of weekly printed sermons!—an absolutely unique record, surely. And there are more to follow. As the buried bells of the old legend continued pealing, long after the tower in which they had hung was ruined, so the gospel bells which C. H. Spurgeon rang so ably are sounding yet, albeit he himself is no more. For all of which we offer the sacrifice of praise continually.

But I must not wander thus, however sweet these by-paths are; for I set out to introduce this "Life." I was led to write as I have written by the consideration that the wonderful career, and the not less wonderful character herein portrayed ought to be told to the generations following. Such a memory well deserves to be kept the greenest of the green. Already, though it seems well-nigh incredible, there are some who have not so much as heard of C. H. Spurgeon. A "Life" reliable and full, though necessarily condensed, the price of which is low enough to place it within the reach of the multitude, was "a felt want." The pages of "The Sunday Magazine" have carried far and wide the record of the great preacher's life-story, and now these chapters are gathered up, and added to, and issued in a dainty and copiously illustrated volume. If it be fancied by some that "C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, by his Wife and Private Secretary" form the staple of this work both as to matter and illustration, it will not be prized the less on that account, and any new features that are noted will be gladly welcomed. The fact is that while he was yet alive,

nearly all that concerned this mighty man was told and retold. He said, as the author of this biography reminds us in his opening sentence, "You may write my life across the sky; I have nothing to conceal." In a very real sense, his life *was* written across the sky. Moreover, no secrets remained to be discovered and published when he was gone, nor were any buried in his tomb.

Because I judge that this book will help to introduce him to a larger circle, I hail it heartily; and because I perceive that the difficult task has been accomplished with no little skill, and with evident sympathy, I commend it cheerfully. Doubtless the author himself would be among the first to admit that to do full justice to the subject is out of the question; but he acknowledges that the writing of this biography has been the most congenial work he has ever done, or is likely to do. His heart has evidently been in it. If his readers put their hearts into the perusal of it, they also will find their task congenial, and, if I mistake not, they will want to know more of him of whom they have been reading. This they may do by perusing what he himself has written. Thus also, by Divine grace, they may hope to catch something of his spirit. May the universal Church continue increasingly to thank Heaven for C. H. Spurgeon, and to glorify God in him.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Hamar Spurgeon." The script is cursive and elegant, with a large initial 'H' and a long, sweeping underline.

Clapham, 1903.

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CHAPTER I.

ANCESTRY AND BIRTH.

“**Y**OU may write my life across the sky, I have nothing to conceal.” Few men are privileged to use such words conscientiously; and yet when Charles Haddon Spurgeon made this statement he was only putting into concrete form that of which every one who ever-came in personal contact with him was convinced, his absolute honesty and sincerity in thought, word and deed. From earliest childhood to his latest day the very taint of anything approaching guile was foreign to his nature, and he was always prepared to follow what he considered the right course, no matter how thankless the task or how bitter the consequences to himself might be through the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of his motives by others. And surely than Charles Haddon Spurgeon in his early days, no man was **ever** more misunderstood or misrepresented, not only by his enemies but by many of those who should have been regarded as his friends. His originality was warped into eccentricity, his simple and happy style of oratory into vulgarity and frivolity, whilst to lend verisimilitude to this distorted picture of the great preacher’s character, a legion of false anecdotes were manufactured, many of which have survived to the present day. His mastery in the use of the Anglo-Saxon tongue was commended by Mr. Ruskin; and yet that rare gift has been misconstrued into evidence that the great preacher was

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not educated in the academic sense of the word. True, he never went through a University course, for reasons which will be set forth hereafter ; but he was a Latin and Greek scholar of no mean merit, systematically studying the New Testament in the original tongue, and he was



The House at Kelvedon, Essex, where Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born.

acquainted with Hebrew sufficiently well to consult the Old Testament in that language. Further, he understood French ; and yet to this day there are thousands, even of his admirers, who believe he had no classical or polite learning. Other men might have taken steps to correct

the erroneous popular impression, but C. H. Spurgeon cared nothing for public opinion so long as his conscience was void of offence to God and man. "They say," he remarked on one occasion to Dr. William Wright, who found him with the Hebrew and Greek texts before him,



The Family Residence of the Spurgeon family
at Hythe Hill, Colchester.

"they say that I am ignorant and unlearned. Well, let them say it; and in everything by my ignorance and by my knowledge let God be glorified."

The great preacher's proficiency in almost all subjects was remarkable, and his sermons are full of historical.

classical, and scientific references, each of the minutest accuracy. Even that most conservative of individuals, the British farmer, has been known on more than one occasion to remark that the preacher was better acquainted with the details of agricultural science than he himself. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a genius, but a genius wholly consecrated to the service of God. Had he devoted himself to literature, to science, to politics, his name to-day would have been emblazoned upon the walls of the Temple of Fame: but he loved the praise of God more than the praise of men, and like Paul preferred to count earthly glory as but dross, that he might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to the multitude.

In these days we hear much of heredity, and, rightly or wrongly, the base propensities of the vicious are attributed in a great measure to inherited tendencies. But if there be a heredity of evil there must also be a heredity of good, and in the Spurgeon family we have a remarkable instance of the benefits resulting from godly parentage accompanied by faithful religious tutelage. As far back as the family can be traced, the members of it have been noted for their piety and loyalty to Puritan truth, and for four successive generations at least, the Spurgeons have filled the pulpit with manifest ability and spiritual success. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was proud of his ancestry, and often expressed his gratitude to God that he should have had grace to be the continuator of any of the virtues of his forbears. The family was of Dutch origin, tracing its descent to the exiles who found a refuge in this country from the persecution of the Duke of Alva in the Low Countries. One branch settled in Essex, and another in Norfolk, and in both cases down to the present time the Spurgeons have been characterized by a close adherence to evangelical doc-

trine and truth. In the latter part of the seventeenth century, at the same time as John Bunyan was lying in Bedford gaol, one Job Spurgeon was suffering for righteousness sake in Essex. He had attended a Nonconformist meeting in 1677, and, under the iniquitous Conventicle Act of Charles II., a distress was levied upon him and his goods were seized. Six years later for a similar offence he was sent to Chelmsford Gaol, where he remained for fifteen



Charles Haddon Spurgeon's mother.

weeks, suffering severely from the intense cold, for no fire was allowed to him in prison, and he had nothing better to sleep upon than a straw pallet "I had far rather be descended," said C. H. Spurgeon, when speaking of this ancestor, who was his great grand-father's great grand-father, "from one who suffered for the faith, than bear the blood of all the emperors within my veins."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born on June 19, 1834, in the little Essex village of Kelvedon. The quaint old-

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fashioned cottage where he first saw the light is still standing, and has changed scarcely at all since that memorable day when it sheltered the tiny babe who was to become England's greatest preacher. C. H. Spurgeon had no early recollection of the place, however; for when he was but ten months old, his father, the Rev. John Spurgeon, removed to Colchester with his family, and six or eight months later the little boy was taken to live with his grandparents at Stambourne. He remained there for nearly six years, and thus the responsibility for the lad's earliest upbringing devolved upon his grandfather and grandmother, and his Aunt Anne, for all of whom he ever cherished the deepest affection. Even after the boy's return to the parental roof, the Rev. John Spurgeon's duties took him so frequently away from home that the training of the family fell largely to the sainted mother; and this important duty, her husband declared, she fulfilled nobly with constant and prayerful thought. On Sunday evenings she would gather the children round her, and as they read a passage of Scripture verse by verse she would explain its meaning and drive home the lessons which it taught. The remarks were pointed, and the children were appealed to individually to seek the Lord. Then she would pray earnestly with them, and one solemn prayer offered on such an occasion was vividly impressed upon Charles Haddon Spurgeon's mind to the day of his death. His mother had pleaded with the children to consider their state before God, and in her prayer she used the words: "Now, Lord, if my children go on in their sins it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear a swift witness against them at the day of judgment if they lay not hold of Christ." That thought of a mother bearing swift

witness against her own children pierced young Spurgeon's conscience and stirred his heart.

The Rev. John Spurgeon survived his son more than ten years. He passed away in July, 1902, at the age of ninety-one, and to the last retained the vigour and energy for which the Spurgeons have been noted. Only the year before he died he personally raised, by sheer hard work, a hundred pounds for the Norwood church in which he was accustomed to worship. Not many men of ninety would have undertaken such a task; for the aged minister's plan was to invite subscriptions of a sovereign, and to each donor he undertook to write an autograph letter of thanks.

The grandfather of the great preacher, the Rev. James Spurgeon, whose influence upon the lad in those early impressionable days must have been enormous, was a man of remarkable integrity, ability and kindness of heart. His grandson and he, indeed, had many characteristics in common, and their preaching was very similar, as to both style and results, and also as to the estimation in which it was held by listeners. Wherever the minister of Stambourne Meeting House went, there souls were sure to be saved; and a devout working man once admirably summed up the preaching in the phrase: "It was always so experimental." Many persons told Charles Haddon Spurgeon in the years of his early success, that they had heard his grandfather preach, and would run their shoes off their feet to hear a Spurgeon, and he himself maintained that no earthly house would ever accommodate a sounder or more useful ministry than that of his grandfather.

The Rev. James Spurgeon, who was born in 1776, at Halstead, in Essex, had been from childhood of a serious



yours very truly
J. Spurgeon

(Bender and Lewis, photo, Croydon.)

The Rev. John Spurgeon, father of Charles Haddon, from the last photograph taken of the venerable minister.

disposition, and while still a lad joined the Independent Church of his native village. He was apprenticed to a trade and worked thereat until his twenty-sixth year when he was led to devote himself entirely to the ministry, and after a two years' course at Hoxton Academy took up his first pastorate at Clare, in Suffolk. It was in 1811 that he went to Stambourne Meeting House, a church probably unique in that it had only four pastors during a period of two hundred years. Mr. James Spurgeon's ministry at the little Essex Chapel lasted for fifty-four years, and he continued preaching with great power and success up to the time of his death at the age of eighty-eight. "I have not had one hour's unhappiness with my church since I have been over it," was the remarkable comment that the aged minister was able to make a few years before he died.

If nothing else had done so, an incident in his life at Stambourne would have endeared the Rev. James Spurgeon to his flock. After holding possession of the chapel-house and land for more than twenty-one years, he incidentally discovered that all the trustees of the property being dead, it was legally his, and counsellors were not wanting who advised him to go home and make a will leaving the whole to his heirs. But James Spurgeon was a man who had not a shadow of covetousness in his nature, and with disinterested generosity he at once called a meeting of the church and had the property put into trust according to the original wishes of the donor. The minister of Stambourne was far from being well-off, but he was always ready "to do good and to communicate." When one of his deacons died, his bedridden wife complained to her pastor that she was in great distress on account of the

rent not being paid. The funds of the church were very low at the time, and the needs of the minister's large family prevented him from providing the sum required. But he soon lighted upon a method of helping the widow. He asked all the members of his family and of the



Yrs most affectionately

Spurgeon

The Rev. James Spurgeon, grandfather of Charles Haddon.

congregation to glean a handful of corn, and no fewer than six hundred persons engaged in this labour of love. The corn was sold, the rent paid, and a substantial balance handed over to the widow.

Like his distinguished grandson, the Rev. James Spurgeon firmly believed in and taught the reality and personality of the devil. An incident in his career is recorded which vividly recalls some of Luther's experiences. The story is best told in the words of Charles Haddon Spurgeon: "My grandfather," he says, "remarked that there was formerly a wood in what I think he called Honeywood Park, which was a very memorable place to him. In that wood he had groaned and wept before the Lord while under the burden of sin and under a tree of oak, then only a sapling, he had received the grace of faith and entered upon the enjoyment of peace with God. It was a lonely spot, but henceforth it was to him no other than the house of God and the very gate of heaven. Often he resorted thither and praised the name of the Lord. Some time after this happy event, having to go from Coggeshall to Halstead, his route was over the hallowed spot. On the night previous he dreamed very vividly that the devil appeared to him, and threatened to tear him in pieces if he dared to go along that footpath and pray under the oak as he had been wont to do. The evil one reminded him that there was another way through the farmyard, and that if he took the farmyard path all would go well with him. When my grandfather awoke, the impression on his mind was overpowering, and he reasoned thus with himself, 'Whether it be a dream or really a temptation from Satan, I cannot tell, but, anyhow, I will not yield to it, but will show the devil that I will not do his bidding in anything, but will defy him to his face.' My grandfather, then a young man, went on cheerily enough till he came to the stile where two paths diverged, then a horrible fear came upon him and he felt his heart beat fast. Suppose he really should meet the archfiend and

should find him too strong for him, what then? Better take the farmyard path. No, that would be yielding to Satan, and he would not do that for ten thousand worlds. He plucked up courage and tremblingly pressed on. The stile was leaped, the narrow tract through the wood was trodden with resolution mingled with forebodings. The



Mrs. James Spurgeon, Charles Haddon's grandmother, who had so much to do with his early training.

oak was in sight, the sweat was on his face, the pace was quickened, a dash was made, and the tree was grasped, but there was no Satan there. Taking breath a moment the young man uttered aloud the exclamation, 'Ah, cowardly devil, you threatened to tear me in pieces and now you do not dare show your face!' Then followed a



The old Manse and Meeting House at Stambourne.

fervent prayer and a song of praise, and the young man was about to go on his way when his eye was caught by something shining on the ground. It was a ring, a very large ring, he told me, nearly as large as a curtain ring, and it was solid gold; how it came there it would be hard to guess. Enquiries were made, but no claimant ever appeared, and my grandfather had it made into my grandmother's wedding-ring in memory of the spot so dear



Back view of the old Meeting-House at Stambourne.

to him. Year by year he continued to visit the oak tree on the day of his conversion to pour out his soul before the Lord."

In the course of time modern improvements swept away the wood and the oak, and on the Rev. James Spurgeon's last visit to the spot it was covered with growing wheat. However, he knelt down to pray, as was his custom, but the

prayer was interrupted in a most ludicrous manner. He had scarcely begun to offer praise when the voice of a farm labourer was heard close by crying out in alarm, "Maister, there be a creazy man a-saying his prayers down in the wheat over thay'rè."

To the last the old gentleman had a fine voice, not unlike his famous grandson's, and no doubt the latter inherited this, as also that appreciation of humour which he put to such good use in his sermons and addresses. "It was my grandfather," said Dr. James Spurgeon, brother of Charles Haddon, "who gave me the first notion of a joke. Someone had asked him how much he weighed. 'Well,' he said, 'that will all depend upon where you take me. If weighed in the balances I am afraid I should be found wanting; but if in the pulpit they tell me that I am heavy enough.'"

The venerable preacher entered into his rest on February 12th, 1864. Mr. Bridge, of Ridgewell, preached the funeral sermon at Stambourne, while the Rev. John Spurgeon, at Cranbrook, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, each delivered a memorial sermon.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY CHILDHOOD.

TO give anything like a full and detailed story of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's childhood is quite impossible, owing to the fragmentary character of the material at the disposal of a biographer. But from these fragments may be obtained, what is far more valuable and interesting than any dry chronological summary, a vivid picture of the wonderful child who set himself to fathom all the mysteries and solve all the puzzles that presented themselves to him in his young life. Of the many stories told of those early days at Stambourne, it is, indeed, not always clear whether the incidents occurred during the first stay of five or six years, or in some of the many long holidays which the lad subsequently spent with his grandfather and grandmother. There is no doubt, however, that it was during his first sojourn at Stambourne that the oft-recounted "killing" of old Roads took place. Little Charles, not yet six years old, had witnessed the grief of the good old minister over the inconsistent conduct of one of his flock, a man who frequented the village inn, drinking and smoking among ungodly companions. One day the boy astonished his grandfather by declaring "I'll kill old Roads, that I will!" The pastor reproved the child, telling him that if he did anything wrong, he would be taken by the police. But the child, very serious and very much in earnest, repeated that he would kill old Roads, though he would

not do anything wrong. The grandfather was puzzled, but he let the subject drop and it passed from his mind. Shortly afterwards, however, the child came into his grandfather's room, saying, "I've killed old Roads, he'll never grieve my dear grandpa any more."

"My dear child," said the minister, in some alarm at the boy's serious tone, "whatever have you done?"

"I haven't been doing any harm, grandpa," he replied. "I've been about the Lord's work, that's all." And from the child nothing further could be elicited.

The mystery was cleared up by old Roads himself, who called upon the pastor, and with a shamefaced air told how he had been "killed." "I was a-sitting in the public, just having my pipe and mug of beer," he said, "when that child comes in—to think an old man like me should be took to task and reprov'd by a bit of a child like that! Well, he points at me with his finger, just so, and says, 'What doest thou here, Elijah, sitting with the ungodly? and you a member of a church and breaking your pastor's heart. I'm ashamed of you! I wouldn't break my pastor's heart, I'm sure.' And then he walks away. Well, I *did* feel angry; but I knew it was all true and I was guilty; so I put down my pipe and did not touch my beer, but hurried away to a lonely spot and cast myself down before the Lord confessing my sin and begging for forgiveness. And I do know and believe the Lord in mercy pardoned me; and now I've come to ask you to forgive me and I'll never grieve you any more, my dear pastor." It was Charles Haddon Spurgeon's first mission, and was attended with the wonderful success which resulted from his great efforts in after life. The backslider's restoration was evidently genuine and lasting, for Mr. Houchin, the Rev. James Spurgeon's successor at Stambourne, declared many years



**Charles Haddon Spurgeon as a child of six reproving a backslider
in the bar of the village inn at Stambourne.**

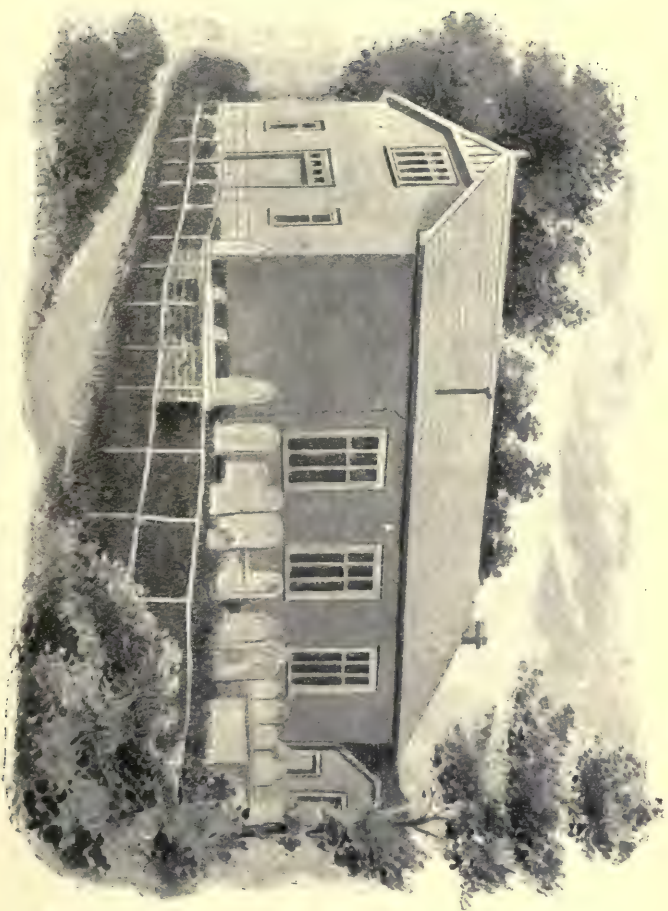
afterwards that Thomas Roads was "an earnest and zealous Christian, striving to be useful in every way possible to him, especially in the prayer meetings and among the young people; opening his house for Christian conversation and prayer."

Such an action on the part of so young a child gave manifest token of unusual precocity, and of a mind cast in deeply religious lines. No doubt the boy's association with people so much his elders, whose lives were devoted entirely to Christian service, had a vast deal to do with his rapid development and his serious attachment to sacred matters. We can hear nothing of youthful playmates during these first six years or so that he spent with his grandparents. He was thrown to a great extent upon his own resources, and his mind worked rapidly in solving the problems that presented themselves.

One of the earliest perplexities of which C. H. Spurgeon retained any recollection was caused by the sight of a large apple in a bottle with a small neck. How did it get there? "Though it was treason to touch the treasures on the mantel-piece," he says, "I took down the bottle and convinced my youthful mind that the apple never passed through its neck; and by means of an attempt to unscrew the bottom, I became equally certain that the apple did not enter from below." The child appears not to have asked anyone for an explanation, but he pondered over the matter until one day the mystery was solved. Upon the bough of a tree he saw an identical bottle within which was growing an apple that had been passed while very small through the neck. It must have been no ordinary childish mind that could deduce the explanation of so curious a mantle ornament from the bottle on the bough. The same spirit of inquiry

and determination to get at the bottom of things led the boy some time later to dig away the soil the day after he had planted some seeds in his little garden plot, to see if the plants had commenced to sprout. Once a problem presented itself to his mind, nothing would satisfy him save a solution that appealed to his reason, or an explanation from an elder in whom he had full confidence. If he could learn nothing by his own observation, then he persistently questioned his grandfather and grandmother until they set his mind at ease. As a small boy Charles was allowed by his grandfather to read the Scripture portion at family worship. It happened that on one particular morning the passage was the seventeenth chapter of Revelation where the bottomless pit is mentioned. "Why, Grandpa, what can this mean?" asked the boy, stopping the reading suddenly. "Pooh, pooh, child, go on," answered his grandfather, without attempting any explanation. The next morning young Charles selected the same passage again, and when he came to the mention of the bottomless pit repeated his inquiry. Getting no satisfactory answer he read the same chapter morning after morning for a week, until at last his grandfather asked the boy what it was that puzzled him. Charles explained that he had often seen baskets, the bottoms of which after much use wore away, leaving the receptacles bottomless. Any fruit then placed inside would fall to the ground, but if the pit referred to had no bottom, where, he wanted to know, would all the people fall who dropped out at its lower end!

Young Spurgeon was an omnivorous reader from his childhood. His father declared that he did nothing else all his time but to busy himself with books. Nothing could entice the boy from his studies, and his wonderful memory retained what he read, so that he had something to say on



The present meeting-house at Siambourne.

almost every subject. And the books he read were good books. True on one occasion a friend lent him a work entitled "Spanish Bullfights," and his parents punished him for reading it. But the boy told one of his sisters shortly afterwards that he thought it was very right he should have been punished. "I should like to forget even the half I read in that book," he said, "but I cannot, it sticks to me like glue! Bad books are terrible things." At Stambourne there was a little dark room, where the window had been blocked up on account of the old window-tax. This chamber was full of venerable theological works by Puritan divines, and the young boy would often steal up to the room and get therefrom a ponderous volume almost too large for him to carry to the living room of the house. But he would manage the task somehow, and then sitting on the floor would silently read by the light of the fire, for candles were expensive luxuries in those days and his grandfather monopolised the flickering rushlight for the preparation of his sermons. It was at Stambourne that the boy made the acquaintance of those old classics Foxe's "Book of Martyrs" and Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," from his early memory of which he has over and over again used telling illustrations. Indeed the whole of his experiences in the home of his grandparents were vividly impressed upon his mind through life, and provided him with illustrations innumerable in his public discourses and written works. "Sermons in Candles," for instance, is very largely made up of incidents and facts that came before his notice as a boy in the old Essex manse.

The lad's earliest acquaintance with books was when, during his long sojourn at Stambourne, his grandfather used, after breakfast on Sunday morning, to give him the Evangelical Magazine to keep him quiet while the good

minister prepared himself for preaching. If the boy made any noise his grandfather told him to be quiet, and gave as a reason, that he had the magazine. "I did not at the time perceive the full force of the argument to be derived from that fact," said C. H. Spurgeon in after years, "but no doubt my venerable relative knew more about the sedative effect of the magazine than I did. I cannot support his opinion from personal experience. Another means of stilling 'the child' was much more effectual. I was warned that perhaps grandpa would not be able to preach if I distracted him,—ah! then, what would happen if poor people did not learn the way to Heaven? This made me look at the portrait and the missionary-station (in the magazine) once more."

After prayers on Sunday morning the little boy was taken to the adjacent meeting-house, sometimes to sit in the pulpit with his grandfather, but more often in one of the large square pews below. These pews were quite of the old-fashioned type, being lined with green baize and fitted with brass rods and curtains so that they could be made private, and shut out from the occupant's sight everything save the minister. Immediately beneath the pulpit was the table-pew, so-called because it contained the table used at communion services, and from this pew, which by the way was paved with old gravestones, Mr. Haddon Spurgeon, the boy's uncle, gave out the hymns and notices and raised the block of wood which indicated to the singers in the gallery above the metre of each hymn. Commodious stables were attached to the meeting-house where worshippers, who came from a distance, might put up their horses and vehicles, and sometimes as many as twenty-six traps or carts would be sheltered at one time on a Sunday morning. Large folding doors on one side of the pulpit enabled

vehicles to be wheeled into the chapel itself, and this was done when an invalid or an infirm worshipper from a distance found the task of alighting and entering a pew too much. This provision must have been wonderfully useful, and yet how strange would the sight appear nowadays. Another curious custom was that the worshippers who had driven into Stambourne used to stand their long whips in the corners of their pews.

Such was the quaint chapel where Charles Haddon Spurgeon first attended divine service. He did not, like most children, drop asleep, but kept very much awake, listening to his grandfather's sermon and taking stock of the building. One thing that struck him particularly was the huge sounding-board over the pulpit, and it was a matter of no small anxiety to the child what would become of the minister if this board should fall suddenly during the service. He thought of his Jack-in-the-box at home, and hoped that his grandfather would never be shut down and shut up in such a fashion.

On Monday Charles was sometimes taken by his venerable relative to the Squire's house to tea, and Mr. James Spurgeon would there have friendly converse with the Rector of Stambourne, Mr. Hopkins. The two preachers were much attached to one another, and worked hand-in-hand as far as possible, realising that they were brethren preaching the same gospel. Sometimes the squire went to church in the morning and to chapel in the afternoon, and the Bible Society held its meetings alternately in connection with the parish church and the meeting-house. Those tea-parties were happy times for the boy, and indeed for the three old gentlemen as well, for they all ate sugared bread-and-butter, a treat appreciated equally by the four.

It was his visits to Stambourne that familiarised young Charles Haddon Spurgeon with the sight of the foxhounds

in full cry after Reynard. The dogs, the red coats of the huntsmen, the horn-blowing, and the hue-and-cry generally constituted his boyish seventh heaven, his climax of delight. The coming of the hounds was always a time of wild excitement at Stambourne, and many of the humbler folk would join in the chase, following the hunt on foot over ditch and hedge, through field and farm, and one who never missed this delight was young Spurgeon. He always declared as a boy, on being asked what profession he would like to adopt when he grew up, that he would prefer being a huntsman to anything else in the wide world. His ardour for the chase, however, was somewhat damped by an incident that occurred when he had once been sent upon an errand. Returning with a basket containing a pound of tea, a quarter-of-a-pound of mustard and three pounds of rice, he caught sight of the hounds, and at once set off in pursuit over hedge and ditch. His excitement made the boy quite forget his purchases, and when at last he reached home, all the goods were found to be mixed in an inextricable mass. The lesson learnt on that occasion, C. H. Spurgeon has recorded, proved very useful to him as a preacher of the Gospel. "I have understood the necessity of packing up my subjects in good stout parcels, bound round with the thread of my discourse; and this makes me keep to firstly, secondly and thirdly, however unfashionable that method may now be. People will not drink mustardy tea, nor will they enjoy muddled up sermons in which they cannot tell head from tail."

The lad's hunting experiences prove that with all his love of books and devotion to study, he was by no means a "prig," who looked with contempt upon the healthy amusements of other boys of his age. Indeed, despite his seriousness, he was full of fun. It was no uncommon joke for him and others to scoop out a turnip, cut eyes and

nose in the shell and then place a lighted candle inside, to scare youngsters and country bumpkins, with the impression that a ghost was in the way. After he went to school, too, at Maidstone, he often played practical jokes on new boys. One piece of mischief was to lead the lads to a jar of ammonia which stood in a certain cupboard, and persuade them to take a good hard sniff. The practice had to be abandoned, however, after one boy fell down in a dead faint, overcome by the ammonia.

As a child Charles Haddon Spurgeon loved to have seasons of quiet meditation. Dreaming of days to come, he has told us, befell him every now and then, and to be quite alone was a delight to him. A favourite resort of his at Stambourne was the old horsing block outside the meeting-house, a kind of platform approached by steps, which enabled lady riders to mount their horses with ease. When the autumn leaves fell they were collected and stuffed under the block, and the boy would pull out sufficient to make room for his little body and then hide himself for hours together. His guardians would call his name and pass the horsing block time and again, but the boy kept his hiding place a secret, and it was only when he became a middle-aged man that he revealed it to his Aunt Anne.

When at last Charles left Stambourne at the close of his first long visit, it was a great sorrow to both himself and his grandfather, and they wept over the parting. But the child obtained great comfort when his aged relative pointed out that at any rate they had the moon in common, and that when the boy looked at it from Colchester, he must remember that his grandfather was gazing upon the same heavenly body from Stambourne. "For years as a child I used to love the moon," said C. H. Spurgeon, "because I thought that my grandfather's eyes and my own somehow met there on the moon."

CHAPTER III.

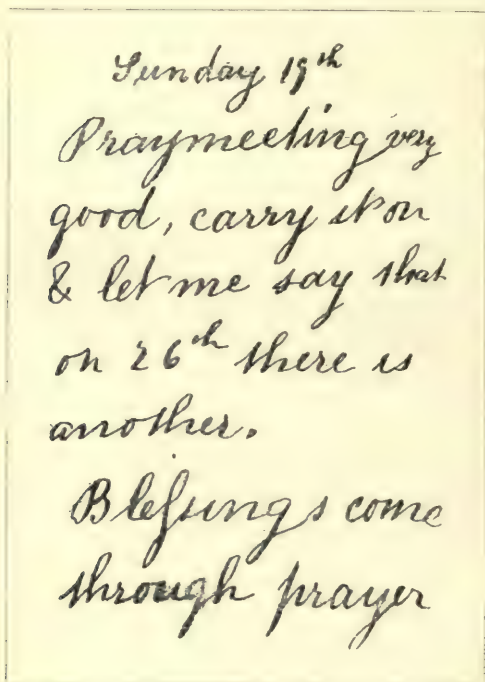
SCHOOLDAYS.

WE are not told what the feelings of young C. H. Spurgeon were on his return to the parental home. By this time there were a number of brothers and sisters, and Charles at once became their leader, and a kind of second father. He prayed with them and often preached little sermons or gave spirited addresses to the juvenile congregation. He brought with him from Stambourne his love for books, and at once set about putting neat covers upon those volumes which had become dilapidated through use or age, numbered them and organized a home library, making one of his sisters librarian. He would recite to the children the many hymns his grandfather had taught him, and a particular favourite was the one in which occurs the verse :—

“Now will I tell to sinners round.
What a dear Saviour I have found ;
I'll point to Thy redeeming blood,
And say, Behold the way to God,”

because at the words “I'll point” the boy would solemnly raise his finger and point upward. At this time, too, he wrote a little book called “Passing Events,” containing an article and an original poem, and he also compiled a manuscript magazine to which he gave the title, “Scraps of Missionary News.” Another of these early literary and

editorial efforts was the "Juvenile Magazine," a little book of sixteen pages, one copy at least of which is still in existence. In this the boy lamented that some of his friends appeared to be falling from grace, and he reminded



A facsimile page of the "Juvenile Magazine" which Charles Haddon Spurgeon as a boy produced for the benefit of his brothers and sisters.

his readers that certain prayer meetings were to be held, urging upon them the value and importance of supplicating the Throne of Grace. Such was the lad as he first

became known to his brothers and sisters. His grandfather had trained him well, and he was not only devout and loving, but was a model child in the respect and reverence which he showed for his parents. One precept of the aged minister at Stambourne, however, led the boy into trouble. His grandfather had impressed upon him to do always that which he believed to be right, no matter what the consequences might be. It was the curious custom at Stambourne meeting-house to repeat the last line of every verse that was sung ; and so when Charles returned to Colchester, and attended his father's chapel, he continued the practice whether the congregation did so or not. The lad's voice was penetrating even then, and the sensation in chapel when it was heard singing the last lines over a second time, can be imagined. A good deal of punishment was necessary before he could be convinced that he must in that case do, not as his grandfather did, but as his parents directed.

The first school that Charles Haddon Spurgeon attended was conducted by a lady named Mrs. Cook. He was undoubtedly the smartest pupil she ever had, and soon learnt all that was to be known there ; so, after a short course, his parents decided to send him to a more advanced school, kept by Mr. Henry Lewis, of Colchester. It was while under the tuition of Mrs. Cook that young Spurgeon contracted his first and last debt. He needed a stick of slate pencil, and, having no money with which to buy it, was in great trouble and perplexity. At home he dared not ask for the money, nor did he dare to go to school without the pencil. Suddenly he remembered having seen boys and girls get things on trust from an old lady who kept a little general shop close by the school. So he determined to buy a farthing pencil, and pay as

soon as he should receive a copper, which could not be long, as Christmas was drawing near. But Charles's father, by some occult means, got to hear of the transaction, and when the boy arrived home rebuked him severely, likening a debtor to a thief. So vivid was the picture he drew of a boy who, having owed a farthing, might one day owe a hundred pounds, and get into prison, disgracing his family, that Charles then and there determined never again to get into debt. After the reproof he was marched off to the shop to pay the farthing, crying bitterly all down the street, because he was so ashamed of himself, and believed everyone he met looked with contempt upon the youthful debtor. The story is told in "John Ploughman's Talk," with many pithy comments thereon, and the parental warnings against debt are repeated. "Ever since that early sickening," wrote C. H. Spurgeon, "I have hated debt as Luther hated the Pope."

While attending this old dame's school, Charles's brother James suffered from weak ankles, which caused him to fall down frequently, and the mud and dirt upon his clothes led to trouble at home. At last the father, thinking to cure the child of what he believed was only carelessness, threatened to punish him whenever he showed any signs of having been upon the ground. From that time he seemed cured, and it was only when Charles Haddon Spurgeon had himself got sons grown to manhood that he offered an explanation to his father which put a different complexion upon the "punishment cure." It transpired that James had many a tumble after the threat had been made; but young Charles, in order that he might not be punished, used to wash his brother's knees and brush his clothes to remove all trace of dirt.

At Mr. Lewis's establishment, which was a good middle-class classical and commercial school, the remarkable boy soon worked his way to the head of the class. He received a prize and was praised by the master. But suddenly he went to the bottom with the same rapidity as he had previously reached the top. For some time the teacher could not understand this falling off, but at last it dawned upon him that perhaps the position of the fire had something to do with the matter. The warm place in the room had hitherto been at the bottom of the class, but the positions were reversed, and it was not long before Charles was again at the head.

The lad used to spend his summer holidays at this period with his grandparents at Stambourne, and it was during a visit in his tenth year that the Rev. Richard Knill made his wonderful prophecy concerning the future career of C. H. Spurgeon. The story is so remarkable that it might well be doubted were it not told by Mr Spurgeon himself, and confirmed by a letter of Mr. Knill. In 1844 this minister, while journeying from place to place, holding meetings on behalf of the London Missionary Society, went to Stambourne and stayed with the Rev. James Spurgeon. He took a fancy to the young boy, and, rousing him at six o'clock one morning, asked him to come into the manse garden. The lad went, and Mr. Knill, leading him to a secluded arbour, told him of the love of Jesus, and of the blessedness of trusting Him in childhood. He knelt down in the arbour and prayed for Charles Haddon Spurgeon. with his arms round the boy's neck. For three successive days this scene was repeated, and made a great and lasting impression upon the little lad. On the morning of his departure, while all the family was gathered for worship, Mr. Knill took the boy on

his knee, and said, "This child will, one day, preach the Gospel, and he will preach it to great multitudes. I am persuaded that he will preach in the chapel of Rowland



Yours affectionately
R Knill

The Rev. Richard Knill, whose prophecy respecting
 C. H. Spurgeon was literally fulfilled.

Hill." He spoke solemnly, and adjured those present to witness what he said. Then he gave the lad sixpence, and

made him promise that when he preached in Rowland Hill's chapel he would let that hymn of Cowper's "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform," be sung. What a promise to ask from a child! And yet every word that the good minister had said came true in due course, and when C. H. Spurgeon preached in Surrey Chapel the hymn was sung. Later, he preached in Rowland Hill's other chapel at Wotton-under-Edge, and there, too, the memorable hymn was sung. Years after the incident at Stambourne, when C. H. Spurgeon had become famous, he went to Chester and preached for Mr. Knill himself.

After learning all that was to be learnt at Mr. Lewis's school, Charles, now fourteen years of age, was sent with his - brother James to All Saints' Agricultural College, Maidstone (now known as St. Augustine's), to complete his schooling. This was a Church of England institution, and three clergymen used to visit it in turns to impart religious instruction to the scholars. Not long after C. H. Spurgeon had entered the college, a boy, being questioned as to the number of sacraments according to Anglican belief, replied, "seven," and when asked to think again, answered, "Oh, sir, there is the one they take at the altar!" Young Spurgeon's sense of humour was excited, and he could not refrain from calling out, "That's hanging, I should think," a suggestion that raised a smile to the clergyman's countenance, but drew forth a reprimand for the interruption. Charles's uncle was a master at this school, and he was greatly offended on one occasion at his nephew correcting an arithmetical error of his before the whole class. He declared that it was derogatory to his dignity, but Charles maintained that it would not have been right to let the mistake pass. "I think after that incident," said C. H. Spurgeon, "he judged that I could



St. Augustine's College, Maidstone, a Church of England institution where Charles Haddon Spurgeon finished his schooling before becoming an usher.

employ my time to the greatest advantage by taking my books and studying by myself beneath an old oak-tree by the river Medway." So far advanced was the lad, indeed, in mathematics that his unclé, who had been commissioned by a certain insurance company to compile life tables for it, handed the work over to the boy; and at the present day the tables which he calculated are in use in the company's office in London.

From Maidstone young Spurgeon passed to Newmarket, where he became an articulated pupil to assist in the school of one John Swindell.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY RELIGIOUS IMPRESSIONS.

IT will have become evident from what has already been told of the early life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, that his character was cast in a deeply religious mould, and his training, both in his grandfather's manse and at home, as well as in the various schools he attended, was all of a nature to engender in him a reverence for sacred things. But it was not merely that the atmosphere in which he moved led to a passive acquiescence in the religious life and beliefs of his elders ; he was himself even as a child keenly interested in all that pertained to Christian doctrine and the manifold activities of the Church. From the time when his father found the boy preaching from the hayrack of a stable, with his brother James in the manger underneath as clerk, and his sisters as congregation, seated upon clean straw which he had placed on the floor for their use, to the day when he became a recognised minister of the Gospel, C. H. Spurgeon took a personal and active interest in all the matters relating to religious life and work. He had a good grasp of the doctrines taught by his father and grandfather, and could hold his own in disputation and debate with many an experienced divine. An interesting instance of this took place at the Maidstone College which he attended for a short time. One of the clergymen who used to visit the institution, to question the boys upon the Church of England Catechism,

endeavoured to convince young Spurgeon that his father and grandfather were wrong in baptizing children, because, unlike their Anglican brethren, they failed to take into consideration the matters of faith and repentance. The boy felt certain that his parents were right, but he promised to look up the subject in the Bible, and a short time afterwards told the clergyman that in spite of himself he had come to the conclusion that the action of his father and grandfather could not be borne out from Scripture. He ventured to suggest, however, that the Anglican clergy appeared equally unscriptural in their christening of infants. But here the clergyman stopped him and explained that the Prayer Book took cognisance of the lack of faith in infants and provided for this by appointing sponsors. The case of a note-of-hand being given in place of money and accepted as an earnest of payment from an honest man was used as an illustration, and the clergyman concluded with the remark: "As the child cannot at the time have faith, we accept the bond that he will; which promise he fulfils at confirmation when he takes the bond into his own hand."

"Well," answered young Spurgeon, "I think it is a very bad note of hand," and after further consideration he declared his opinion that not only his own relations were wrong, but that the Church of England was wrong also. When the clergyman asked if, in view of his own confession, that he had not been properly baptized, he would not think it his duty, if in his power, to conform to the Anglican practice of baptism, and have sponsors to promise on his behalf, the youth promptly replied: "Oh, no! I have been baptized once before I ought; I will wait next time till I am fit for it."

Curiously enough it was this examination of the subject

of baptism in the Bible and the Catechism that led later on to C. H. Spurgeon becoming a Baptist. Preaching in the Metropolitan Tabernacle more than forty years afterwards he referred to the matter and declared that he owed his position there to having attended the Church of England school at Maidstone. "The Church of England Catechism has in it, as some of you may remember," he said, "this question: 'What is required of persons to be baptized?' and the answer I was taught to give and did give, was, 'Repentance whereby they forsake sin; and faith whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament.' I looked that answer up in the Bible, and I found it to be strictly correct as far as repentance and faith are concerned; and here I am, and it is due to the Church of England Catechism that I am a Baptist. Having been brought up amongst Congregationalists, I had never looked at the matter in my life. I had thought myself to have been baptized as an infant; and so when I was confronted with the question: 'What is required of persons to be baptized?' and I found that repentance and faith were required, I said to myself: 'Then I have not been baptized; that infant sprinkling of mine was a mistake; and, please God that I ever have repentance and faith, I will be properly baptized.' I did not know that there was one other person in the world who held the same opinion; for so little do Baptists make any show, or so little did they do so then, that I did not know of their existence. So I feel grateful to the Church school and grateful to the Church Catechism for what I learnt at Maidstone."

At the Newmarket school, where he became a kind of pupil teacher, C. H. Spurgeon found himself amid surroundings more congenial, religiously, than at All Saints' College, Maidstone. Mr. Swindell, the principal, was a

Baptist, although the school itself was conducted on Independent lines, and among the inmates was an aged cook named Mary King, who often had long conversations with the young usher, and according to C. H. Spurgeon himself, gave him the first lessons he ever had in theology. She was a strong Calvinist in belief, and as she and young Spurgeon attended the same chapel in Newmarket, they usually discussed the sermons together. These were apparently not of a character to satisfy either. The only way in which the old lady obtained any good was by "scratching over the poor sermons," as a hen scratches over a heap of rubbish, and when she found no corn, as was generally the case, the exercise, she declared, at any rate warmed her. On one occasion she told the young usher that she had that night got on better than usual, for to all the preacher said, the old dame put in a "no," and that "turned his talk into real Gospel." "Many a time," said C. H. Spurgeon, "we have gone over the covenant of grace together, and talked of the personal election of the saints, their union to Christ, their final perseverance, and what vital godliness meant; and I do believe that I learnt more from her than I should have learned from any six doctors of divinity of the sort we have nowadays. There are some Christian people who taste and see and enjoy religion in their own souls, and who get at a deeper knowledge of it than books can ever give them, though they should search all their days. The cook at Newmarket was a godly, experienced woman, from whom I learned far more than I did from the minister of the chapel we attended." This old lady, whose conversations had so much to do with the young usher's theological education, lived for many years after the days spent together at Newmarket. She moved to Ipswich, and when C. H. Spurgeon

heard that her small income had been almost expended, he made her a generous weekly allowance which continued to the time of her death.

At this period Charles Haddon Spurgeon had not experienced the change of heart known as conversion; but nevertheless he manifested an earnestness in religious matters rare in one of his age. Perhaps the most remarkable instance of this is furnished by the *Essay on Popery*, which he wrote at the age of fifteen in competition for a prize offered by Mr. Samuel Morley, M.P. The essay, which was entitled, "Antichrist and her Brood; or Popery Unmasked," did not win the prize, nor has it ever been published in its entirety. But even for a man of ripe years and scholarship, it would have been no mean performance, and indeed Mr. Morley appreciated the work so highly that two years later he sent the youthful writer a sum of money as a reward for his ability and perseverance. The purpose, however, in referring to the matter here, is to indicate the remarkable circumstances attending the writing of the essay. It was penned, confessedly, before the writer went through those deep spiritual experiences that culminated in his conversion, and yet the whole of the long manuscript, covering nearly three hundred pages, was written by C. H. Spurgeon upon his knees, in a little upper room away from everyone, after he had solemnly vowed to give two tithes of anything he might gain by it "to the Lord's cause." The compact was rigidly carried out, and from that time onward the youth who had hitherto given a tenth of his income for religious purposes, made it a practice to distribute a fifth.

We do not know a great deal of C. H. Spurgeon's life at this period, but the little glimpses we get show that his practice was in accordance with his religious profession.

Professor Everett, who was a fellow-assistant with him at the Newmarket School, kept a journal at the time, and the entry for Tuesday, October 9th, 1849, is interesting as showing the conscientiousness of the young usher. The entry runs thus: "After dinner I took Percy and four other boys to see the races. We saw the Cesarewitch, the most celebrated race at Newmarket; thirty-one horses ran. We also saw four other races. I saw quite enough to gratify my curiosity, and did not wish to stop to see any more races. Mr. Spurgeon did not go, as he thought he should be doing wrong if he went." The home-training of his mother, the sum and substance of which was to abstain not only from evil, but from every appearance of evil was bearing fruit. In Sabbath observance he was strict, and regularly attended a place of worship morning and evening. The whole household of Mr. Swindell was conducted on the principle of as little Sunday work as possible. No cooking was done, save perhaps the heating up of a pudding made on Saturday, or of a few potatoes, and thus the young usher enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a continuance of the strict religious discipline practised in his grandfather's and father's homes.

Now came those months of soul-agony, of searching after God, of darkness and gloom, which remind one of the experiences of John Bunyan and other old Divines,—deep spiritual turmoils such as one hears little of nowadays. But C. H. Spurgeon was ever thankful to God for leading him through deep waters. "A spiritual experience," he tells us, "which is thoroughly flavoured with a deep and bitter sense of sin is of great value to him that hath had it. It is terrible in the drinking, but it is most wholesome in the whole of the after life. . . . We would not judge modern

converts, but we certainly prefer that form of spiritual exercise which leads the soul by the way of Weeping-cross and makes it see its blackness before assuring it that it is clean, every whit. Too many think lightly of sin, and therefore think lightly of the Saviour. He who has stood before his God convicted and condemned, with the rope about his neck, is the man to weep for joy when he is pardoned, to hate the evil which has been forgiven him, and to live to the honour of the Redeemer by whose blood he has been cleansed."

The beginning of these deep experiences was when under a powerful sermon the youth felt his heart shake within him, and bowing his knee wrestled in prayer with the object of seeking the Lord. Again he went to the sanctuary, eager and anxious to hear and grasp a promise that should bring peace and joy to his soul, but this time he heard a sermon in which there was no mention of Christ as the Saviour of sinners. Thereupon he lost hope, and for the time being his soul knew not what was truth or what was error. Ordinances he found "vain as bottles scorched by the simoom and drained of their waters." "Vain were ceremonies—vain as empty wells to the thirsty Arab. Vain were the delights of the flesh—bitter as the waters of Marah, which even the parched lips of Israel refused to drink. Vain were the directions of the legal preacher—useless as the howling of the wind to the benighted wanderer. Vain, worse than vain, were our refuges of lies, which fell about our ears like Dagon's Temple on the heads of the worshippers." The wretched youth remembered how as a child he had prayed, and on one occasion, at any rate, received a marked answer to prayer, and so he prayed perpetually, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me! O Jesus come to me." Never,

he tells us, did such a prayer escape his lips as that which he offered in the bitterness of his spirit when seeking the Saviour. "There was then no sleepiness or sluggishness in our devotion ; we did not then need the whip of command to drive us to labours of prayers ; but our soul could not be content unless with sighs and lamentations with strong crying and tears, it gave vent to our bursting heart. Then we had no need to be dragged to our closets like oxen to the slaughter, but we flew to them like doves to their windows ; and when there, we needed no pumping up of desires, but they gushed forth like a fountain of waters, although at times we felt we could scarcely find them a channel."

As a boy he had often repeated a form of prayer, but this crying to God in an agony of soul was something quite different from a repetition of words that lose their meaning through familiarity. He poured out his soul in prayer. "And then I saw myself standing before God in the immediate presence of the heart-searching Jehovah, and I said within myself, 'I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee ; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.' I felt like Esther when she stood before the king, faint and overcome with dread. I was full of penitence of heart, because of His majesty and my sinfulness. I think the only words I could utter were something like these, 'Oh—ah !' And the only complete sentence was, 'God be merciful to me a sinner !' The overwhelming splendour of His majesty, the greatness of His power, the severity of His justice, the immaculate character of His holiness and all His dreadful grandeur—these things overpowered my soul and I fell down in utter prostration of spirit ; but there was in that prayer a true and real drawing near to God."

At times, in the deep anguish of his spirit, the penitent would stay his petitions because he thought them hopeless, or because he felt himself unworthy even to pray. The heavens seemed brass above him, and he believed that if he cried never so earnestly, the Lord would shut out his prayer. At another time he durst not pray because he was too guilty. Prayer seemed presumption, and his spirit could only lament and long and pant and sigh to be able to pray. Day and night God's hand was heavy upon him. He longed for deliverance, and feared lest the very skies should fall upon him and crush his soul. When he slept he dreamed of the bottomless pit, and when he woke the misery of the dream remained with him. First thing in the morning he would read feverishly Alleine's *Alarm to Sinners*, or Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, but that was like "sitting at the foot of Sinai." His childhood's years came before him as years of guilt and sin, and so outrageous did his conduct in the sight of God appear that over and over again he wished he had never been born. "I had rather pass through seven years of the most wearisome pain and the most languishing sickness," he declared afterwards, "than I would ever again pass through the terrible discovery of the evil of sin. It was my sad lot at that time to feel the greatness of my sin without a discovery of the greatness of God's mercy. I had to walk through this world with more than a world upon my shoulders, and sustain a grief that as far exceeds all other griefs as a mountain exceeds a molehill; and I often wonder to this day how it was that my hand was kept from rending my own body in pieces through the awful agony which I felt when I discovered the greatness of my transgression. Yet I had not been openly and publicly a greater sinner than others; but heart sins were

laid bare, sins of lip and tongue were discovered, and then I knew—oh that I may never have to learn over again in such a dreadful school this terrible lesson! ‘the iniquity of Judah and of Israel is exceeding great.’ Before I thought upon my soul’s salvation, I dreamed that my sins were very few. All my sins were dead, as I imagined, and buried in the graveyard of forgetfulness. But that trumpet of conviction which aroused my soul to think of eternal things sounded a resurrection-note to all my sins; and, oh, how they rose up in multitudes more countless than the sands of the sea! Now I saw that my very thoughts were enough to damn me, that my words would sink me lower than the lowest hell; and as for my acts of sin, they now began to be a stench in my nostrils, so that I could not bear them. I thought I had rather have been a frog or a toad than have been made a man; I reckoned that the most defiled creature, the most loathsome and contemptible, was a better thing than myself, for I had so grossly and grievously sinned against God.”

After a train of thought like this the youth would be almost overwhelmed with fear and misery. Then would come a reaction and taking stock of his life he would begin to regard himself as a respectable lad, and pride himself that he had not indulged in outward forms of sin like other boys—disobedience, dishonesty, swearing, Sabbath-breaking and lying. And this, be it remembered, was no mere idle boast from the human standpoint, for his Aunt Anne, who lived under the same roof for many years with the boy, declared that she had never once known Charles Haddon Spurgeon to tell a lie. But he would not be long in this state of mind before Moses carrying the law of God would rise before his mental vision, and as

he thought of the ten commandments they all seemed to join in accusing and condemning him in the sight of a thrice-holy Jehovah. At such time he was dumb in spirit, and could speak no word of self-justification. He felt himself to be a sinner, even in the house of God. Singing seemed a mockery, and prayer an insult to Jehovah. The workings of his mind were as a maelstrom. At times he would have evil desires, but no opportunities of sinning presented themselves, for which he devoutly thanked God; at other times the opportunities were there, but the desire toward evil had fled. He dared not plunge into profligacy like others, for even to put one foot before another caused him to tremble lest he did wrong. At every turn, sleeping or waking, God's law came up before him, and the words would flash upon his mind again and again. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Then the agonized youth would sit in judgment upon himself, declaring that if God did not send him to hell He ought to do it. "I could not have gone to heaven with my sin unpardoned, even if I had had the offer to do it, for I knew that it would not be right that I should do so, and I justified God in my own conscience while I condemned myself." When he tried to do good works he found the attempt only slavery. If he went to God's house it was because he thought he must do so; if he thanked God for a mercy it was because he thought he should not get another if he were not thankful. "If I could have had my will, there would have been no chapel-going for me, no religion for me. I would have lived in the world and followed the ways of Satan if I could have done as I pleased." And yet such thoughts only increased a hundred-fold his sense of sin. He wondered that the

earth bore up such a sinner as he was, and that the heavens did not fall and crush him, and that the stars in their courses did not fight against such a "wretch" as he felt himself to be. "Then, indeed, did I seem as if I should go down to the pit, and I had perpetually to endure the tortures of the never-dying worm of conscience that was gnawing at my heart."

For several months this state of things continued, and it is a marvel that with such mental distraction and agony the young usher could perform his duties in the school. Whenever he obtained any spare time he used to read the Bible, but while the threatenings seemed all printed in capitals, the promises were in such small type that he could not for a long time make them out. He did not believe the promises were for him at all, but the threatenings he took as all his own. It is quite impossible for those who have not been through such deep and varied experiences—and how few there are who have—to understand the workings of the youth's mind at this time. "Though, God knoweth, I would weep and cry, and lament till my heart was breaking within me," he tells us, "if any man had asked me whether I sorrowed for sin, I should have told him, 'No, I never had any true sorrow for sin.' 'Well, do you not feel the burden of sin?' 'No!' 'But you really are a convinced sinner?' 'No,' I should have said, 'I am not.'"

And now occurred what was to Charles Haddon Spurgeon undoubtedly the most awful period of his life from the spiritual standpoint—a period when he was tempted to give up everything he had ever learned of religion and to blaspheme God, a period when he let go the anchor that had held him to the truths of revelation, and became an unbeliever. He has told us little about the experience,

but that little reveals a world of fiercest conflict. The story is graphically recorded in his own words :—

“I speak what I do know and not what I have learned by report when I say that there is a chamber in the experience of some men where the temptations of the devil exceed all belief. Read John Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding* if you would understand what I mean. The devil tempted him, he says, to doubt the existence of God, tempted him to say things which he will never write, lest he should pollute others. Ah! I recollect a dark hour with myself when I, who do not remember to have even heard a blasphemy in my youth, much less to have uttered one, found rushing through my mind an almost infinite number of curses and blasphemies against the Most High God. I specially recall a certain narrow and crooked lane in a country town along which I was walking one day while I was seeking the Saviour. On a sudden it seemed as if the floodgates of hell had been opened; my head became a very pandemonium; ten thousand evil spirits seemed to be holding carnival within my brain; and I held my mouth lest I should give utterance to the words of blasphemy that were poured into my ears. Things I had never heard or thought of before came rushing impetuously into my mind, and I could scarcely withstand their influence. It was the devil throwing me down and tearing me. These things sorely beset me; for half-an-hour together the most fearful imprecations would dash through my brain. Oh, how I groaned and cried before God! That temptation passed away; but ere many days it was renewed again; and when I was in prayer, or when I was reading the Bible, these blasphemous thoughts would pour in upon me more than at any other time. I consulted with an aged godly man about it. He said to me, ‘Oh,

all this many of the people of God have proved before you. But,' he asked, 'do you hate these thoughts?' 'I do,' I truly answered. 'Then,' said he, 'they are not yours; serve them as the old parish officers used to do with vagrants: whip them and send them on to their own parish. So,' said he, 'do with those evil thoughts. Groan over them; repent of them and send them on to the devil, the father of them to whom they belong, for they are not yours.'"

Those who know John Bunyan's life story as told in his *Grace Abounding* will appreciate the reference thereto. And yet how strange that two men, whose youthful days were spent so differently, whose early lives and aspirations were wide as the poles asunder, should have had spiritual experiences almost identical, that each—the respectable religious youth who was never known to tell a lie, and the profligate who even as a child had few equals in cursing, swearing, lying and blasphemy, and whose language made even notorious sinners tremble—should have had that dread sense of their heinous sinfulness before God.

But more remarkable, perhaps, than the persistent temptations to blasphemy and profanity, in the case of one whose early and after life was such as that of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, is the fact that he should for a time have been a sceptic. "I have never been thoroughly an unbeliever but once," he says, "and that was not before I knew the need of a Saviour, but after it. It was just when I wanted Christ and panted after Him that, on a sudden, the thought crossed my mind—which I abhorred but could not conquer—that there was no God, no Christ, no Heaven, no hell; that all my prayers were but a farce and that I might as well have whistled to the winds or

spoken to the howling waves. Ah! I remember how my ship drifted through that sea of fire, loosened from the anchor of my faith which I had received from my fathers. I no longer moored myself hard by the coasts of Revelation; I said to reason, 'Be thou my captain'; I said to my own brain, 'Be thou my rudder,' and I started on my mad voyage. Thank God, it is all over now; but I will tell you its brief history. It was one hurried sailing over the tempestuous ocean of free thought. I went on, and as I went the skies began to darken; but to make up for that deficiency the waters were gleaming with coruscations of brilliancy. I saw sparks flying upwards that pleased me, and I felt, 'If this be free thought, it is a happy thing.' My thoughts seemed gems, and I scattered stars with both my hands; but, anon, instead of these coruscations of glory, I saw grim fiends, fierce and horrible, start up from the waters; and as I dashed on they gnashed their teeth and grinned upon me; they seized the prow of my ship and dragged me on, while I, in part, gloried at the rapidity of my motion, but yet shuddered at the terrific rate with which I passed the old landmarks of my faith. I went to the very verge of the dreary realms of unbelief. I went to the very bottom of the sea of infidelity. As I hurried forward at an awful speed I began to doubt if there were a world. I doubted everything until at last the devil defeated himself by making me doubt my own existence. I thought I was an idea floating in the nothingness of vacuity; then, startled with that thought and feeling that I was substantial flesh and blood after all, I saw that God was and Christ was and Heaven was and hell was, and that all these things were absolute truths. The very extravagance of the doubt proved its absurdity, and there came a voice which said,

‘And can this doubt be true?’ Then I awoke from that death-dream, which God knows might have damned my soul and ruined my body if I had not awoke. When I arose faith took the helm; from that moment I doubted not. Faith steered me back; faith cried, ‘Away, away!’ I cast my anchor on Calvary; I lifted my eye to God; and here I am alive and out of hell. Therefore I speak what I do know. I have sailed that perilous voyage; I have come safe to land. Ask me again to be an infidel! No; I have tried it; it was sweet at first, but bitter afterwards.”

The young usher was not yet at the end of his searchings after God and his strivings after peace. He now sought to win salvation by good works and laboured hard and strove diligently to preserve a character for integrity and uprightness. Nothing that he thought might be pleasing to God was left undone, and he tells us that if in order to be saved it had been declared necessary to take off his shoes and stockings and run to John o’ Groats he would not even have gone home first, but would have started off that very night; if he had been told to bare his back to the scourge and to take fifty lashes he would have said: “Here I am! Come along with your whip and beat as hard as you please so long as I can obtain peace and rest and get rid of my sin.” But the only result was that the now distracted youth learnt that his strivings were vain. “I tried a long time to improve myself,” he says, “but I never did make much of it; I found I had a devil within me when I began, and I had ten devils when I left off. Instead of becoming better I became worse; I had now got the devil of self-righteousness of self-trust and self-conceit, and many others that had come and taken up their lodging within my heart. While I was busy sweeping my house

and garnishing it, behold the one I sought to get rid of who had only gone for a little season returned and brought with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they entered in and dwelt there. Then I laboured to believe. It is a strange way of putting it, yet so it was. When I wished to believe I found I could not. It seemed to me that the way to Heaven by Christ's righteousness was as difficult as by my own, and that I could as soon get to Heaven by Sinai as by Calvary. I could do nothing; I could neither repent nor believe. I fainted with despair, feeling as if I must be lost, despite the Gospel, and be forever driven from Jehovah's presence, even though Christ had died." Yet notwithstanding such experiences C. H. Spurgeon in later years declared that he never would have been saved if he could have helped it. As long as he could, he rebelled and revolted and struggled against God. "When He would have me pray I would not pray; when He would have me listen to the sound of the ministry I would not. And when I heard and the tear rolled down my cheek I wiped it away and defied Him to melt my heart. When my heart was a little touched I tried to divert it with sinful pleasures; and would not then have been saved until God gave me the effectual blow and I was obliged to submit to that irresistible effort of His grace. It conquered my depraved will and made me bow myself before His gracious sceptre. When the Lord really brought me to myself He sent me one great shot which shivered me to pieces; and lo, I found myself utterly defenceless. I thought I was more mighty than the angels and could accomplish all things; but I found myself less than nothing."

The end, however, was not yet. A series of what C. H. Spurgeon describes as "falls" succeeded, each of which,

although he did not know it at the time, had the effect of bringing him nearer to the truth of salvation through faith in the crucified Saviour. Like Zaccheus, the young usher heard the Master's voice saying to him, "Make haste and come down." "One of the first steps I had to take was to go right down from my good works; and, oh, what a fall was that! Then I stood upon my own self-sufficiency and Christ said, 'Come down! I have pulled you down from your good works, and now I will pull you down from your self-sufficiency!' So I had another fall and I felt sure I had gained the bottom, but again Christ said, 'Come down!' and He made me come down till I fell on some point at which I felt I was yet salvable. But still the command was, 'Down, sir! Come down further yet.' And down I came until in despair I had to let go every bough of the tree of my hopes and then I said, 'I can do nothing; I am ruined!' The waters were wrapped round my head and I was shut out from the light of day and thought myself a stranger from the commonwealth of Israel. But Christ said, 'Come down lower yet, sir! thou hast too much pride to be saved.' Then I was brought down to see my corruption, my wickedness, my filthiness, for God always humbles the sinner whom He means to save. While I was in this state, trying to make myself believe, a voice whispered, 'Vain man, vain man, if thou wouldst believe, come and see!' Then the Holy Spirit led me by the hand to a solitary place, and while I stood there, suddenly there appeared before me One upon His cross. I looked up; I had then no faith; I saw His eyes suffused with tears and the blood still flowing; I saw His enemies about Him hunting Him to His grave; I marked His miseries unutterable; I heard the groaning which cannot be described; and as I looked up, He opened His

eyes and said to me, 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.' " But the youth did not yet find that peace which he sought, although light was dawning upon his soul. He wanted not only salvation from hell but salvation from sin, and when he heard and read that if he gave his heart to Christ, He would keep him from sin and preserve him so long as he lived, his young heart was filled with rapture. He was afraid, however, that Christ would never save him, but for all that the lad felt in his heart that he must love the Saviour for what He had done for other sinners. "It seemed to me as I read the wondrous story of His life and death that if He refused me I would still lie at His feet, and say, 'Thou mayest spurn me but Thou art a blessed Christ for all that; and if Thou dost curse me yet I can only say to Thee that I well deserve it at Thy hands. Do what Thou wilt with me; but Thou didst save the dying thief. and thou didst save her out of whom Thou didst cast seven devils, and if Thou dost not deign to save me, yet Thou art a blessed Christ, and I cannot rail at Thee or find fault with Thee, but I lie down at Thy feet and worship Thee.' I could not help saying once that even if He damned me I would love God because He was so gracious to others."

In the midst of his despair the troubled youth proved the value of a mother's early teaching, and some words that his beloved parent had once uttered brought a measure of comfort to his soul. Mrs. John Spurgeon had declared that although she had heard many people swear and blaspheme God, one thing she had never heard was, a man to say that he had sought Christ and Christ had rejected him. The youth remembered these words, and although at first he thought the Saviour had

rejected *him*, and even if it destroyed his soul was determined to say so, yet his mother's words acted as a restraint and an incentive to further seeking, with the result that from personal experience he was afterwards able to add his own witness to that of his parent. And how it testified to the absolutely sterling and rigidly honest character of Charles Haddon Spurgeon that at this early age and in the midst of such agonizing experiences when he grasped at hope as a drowning man at a straw, he yet had upon his mind a deep concern for the honour of God's name and the integrity of His moral government. He felt that it would not satisfy his conscience if he were forgiven unjustly, while at the same time the question how God could be just and yet justify him who had been so guilty, appeared unanswerable.

So great was the agony of his soul at times that but for one text which came to him repeatedly in his moments of greatest despair, he would, according to his own confession, more than probably have been driven to suicide. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" was the text, and, although the young usher could not believe in Christ as he wished, he nevertheless knew that day and night, with groans and tears and sighs, he called upon the name of the Lord, and if the promise were true God could not cast him off.

Light was near, but the story of how it came must be reserved for another chapter. We have given the history of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's spiritual conflicts, his alternations of gloom and hope, of defiance and supplication, thus fully, because of their influence upon his theology and preaching in after life. Save in his "Autobiography" this remarkable and important period of his life has never been adequately dealt with in any book, most biographers

telling of his conversion with no more than a passing reference to the soul-agony he endured before finding peace in believing. It is noteworthy that most of the great divines who have dealt with the Protestant truth of salvation by faith, and have urged upon assembled multitudes the needs of personal religion, have passed through spiritual experiences more or less akin to those described above. Luther and Bunyan are instances in point, and there is no doubt that, as C. H. Spurgeon says, "it often proves a great blessing to a man that he has had a terrible conflict, a desperate encounter, a hard-fought engagement, in passing from the empire of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear son." Such an experience enables a man to deal sympathizingly and adequately with another in similar case, and the fact that the preacher when talking with a young convert in deep distress about his sin can tell him something more of his anxious plight than he himself knows, is calculated to inspire the confidence and open the heart of the inquirer. "I know that a man's own experience is one of the very best weapons he can use in fighting with evil in other men's hearts," said C. H. Spurgeon on one occasion. "Often their misery and despondency, aggravated as it commonly is by a feeling of solitariness, will be greatly relieved before it is effectually driven out when they find that a brother has suffered the same and yet has been able to overcome." And Charles Haddon Spurgeon did suffer during those six terrible months as few other men of his time suffered, but his after life was all the brighter and his faith the stronger for the experience. Well might he say, "There is a power in God's Gospel beyond all description." He experienced it and he knew the power. "Once I, like Mazeppa, lashed to the wild horse of my lust, bound hand and foot,

incapable of resistance, was galloping on with hell's wolves behind me, howling for my body and my soul as their just and lawful prey. There came a mighty hand which stopped that wild horse, cut my bands, set me down, and brought me into liberty. Is there power in the Gospel? Ay, there is, and he who has felt it must acknowledge it. There was a time when I lived in the strong old castle of my sins, and rested in my own works. There came a trumpeter to the door and bade me open it. I with anger chid him from the porch and said he ne'er should enter. Then there came a goodly Personage with loving countenance! His hands were marked with scars where nails had been driven, and His feet had nail-prints, too. He lifted up His cross, using it as a hammer; at the first blow the gate of my prejudice shook; at the second, it trembled more; at the third, down it fell and in He came; and He said, 'Arise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' The Gospel a thing of power! Ah! that it is. It always wears the dew of its youth; it glitters with morning's freshness, its strength, and its glory abide for ever. I have felt its power in my own heart, I have the witness of the Spirit within my spirit, and I know it is a thing of might because it has conquered me and bowed me down."

CHAPTER V.

CONVERSION.

LIKE many another giant of the pulpit, Charles Haddon Spurgeon was converted through a poor sermon preached by a man of mean ability but undoubted earnestness. The youth's spiritual conflicts had left him distracted and hopeless, but a turning point came which was the first of a train of circumstances that led him to the little chapel where light at last shone into his soul. He was out walking one day when, as he tells us, he saw before him his Friend, his best and only Friend murdered. Affrighted, the youth stooped to gaze, and saw that that Friend's hands had been pierced with rough iron nails and His feet had been rent. There was misery in His dead countenance so terrible that the lad scarcely dared to look upon it. His body was emaciated with hunger, His back was red with bloody scourges, and His brow had a circle of wounds about it. The vision was a realistic one, and the youth shuddered. This Friend, he knew full well, had never had a fault; He was the purest of the pure, the holiest of the holy. Who could have injured Him? He had never injured any man: all His life long He went about doing good, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, raising the dead, and, as young Spurgeon looked into the sorrowful face, so full of agony and yet so full of love, He wondered who could have been a wretch so vile as to pierce hands like His. A flood of

indignation swept over the youth, and he longed to seize the murderers and torment them to the utmost of his power. "Oh! what jealousy, what revenge I felt," he says. "If I might but find these murderers, what would I do with them! And as I looked upon that corpse I heard a footstep and wondered where it was. I listened and I clearly perceived that the murderer was close at hand. It was dark, and I groped about to find him. I found that, somehow or other, wherever I put out my hand I could not meet with him for he was nearer to me than my hand would go. At last I put my hand upon my breast. 'I have thee now,' said I, for lo! he was in my own heart; the murderer was hiding within my own bosom, dwelling in the recesses of my inmost soul. Ah! then I wept indeed, that I, in the very presence of my murdered Master, should be harbouring the murderer; and I felt myself most guilty while I bowed over His corpse and sang that plaintive hymn:—

'Twas you my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were;
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear."

The youth's attitude in connection with the matter that had convulsed him was from that time completely changed. He went home for the Christmas holidays at the end of 1849 with a firm determination to visit every place of worship in the town in order to find out the way of salvation. No record exists of exactly how many chapels he attended, but nowhere could he learn what he wanted to know. The ministers expounded the great truths of the Christian faith and their sermons were eminently suited to spiritually-minded people. But what the youth required was knowledge as to how he could get his sins forgiven, and

this no man told him. At last there came a day when the hand of God was unmistakably extended to lead Charles Haddon Spurgeon a way he thought not of. He had intended to go to a certain chapel some distance from his home and set out upon the road. But a heavy snowstorm came on and prevented him from continuing the journey. He turned into an obscure street, and saw at the end of a court a little sanctuary which proved to be the Artillery Street Primitive Methodist Chapel. This church, hitherto known perhaps to few people even in Colchester, was destined to become world-famed as the result of that visit by the youth of little more than fifteen years. He was not prepossessed in its favour as he entered, for he had always heard that the Primitive Methodists were people who sang so loudly that they made one's head ache. But even if this were true he cared not so long as they taught him how he might be saved. The remainder of the story shall be told by C. H. Spurgeon himself.

"The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last a very thin-looking man, a shoe-maker or tailor or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. Now it is well that preachers should be instructed; but this man was really stupid. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth.' He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text. The preacher began thus: 'My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, "Look." Now, lookin' don't take a deal of pains. It ain't liftin' your foot or your finger; it is just "Look." Well, a man needn't go to college to learn to look. You may be the



The Artillery Street Primitive Methodist Chapel, in which C. H. Spurgeon was converted.

biggest fool and yet you can look. A man needn't be worth a thousand a year to be able to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. But then the text says, "Look unto *Me*." Ay!' said he in broad Essex, 'many on ye are lookin' to yourselves, but it's no use lookin' there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No; look to Him by-and-by. Jesus Christ says, "Look unto *Me*." Some on ye say, "We must wait for the Spirit's workin'." You have no business with that just now. Look to Christ. The text says, "Look unto *Me!*"'

"Then the good man followed up his text in this way: 'Look unto *Me*; I am sweatin' great drops of blood. Look unto *Me*; I am hangin' on the cross. Look unto *Me*; I ascend to Heaven. Look unto *Me*; I am sittin' at the Father's right hand. O poor sinner, look unto *Me!* look unto *Me!*'

"When he had gone to about that length and managed to spin out ten minutes or so he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I dare say with so few present he knew me to be a stranger. Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, 'Young man, you look very miserable.' Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, 'And you always will be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.' Then lifting up his hands he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, 'Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin' to do but to look and live.' I saw at once the way of salvation.

I know not what else he said—I did not take much notice of it—I was so possessed with that one thought. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people



This is the pulpit which stood in Artillery Street Chapel, Colchester, and from which the sermon was preached on the historic occasion of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's conversion. The pulpit was purchased by the Rev. V. J. Charlesworth and removed to Stockwell Orphanage, where it now stands.

only looked and were healed, so it was with me. I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that

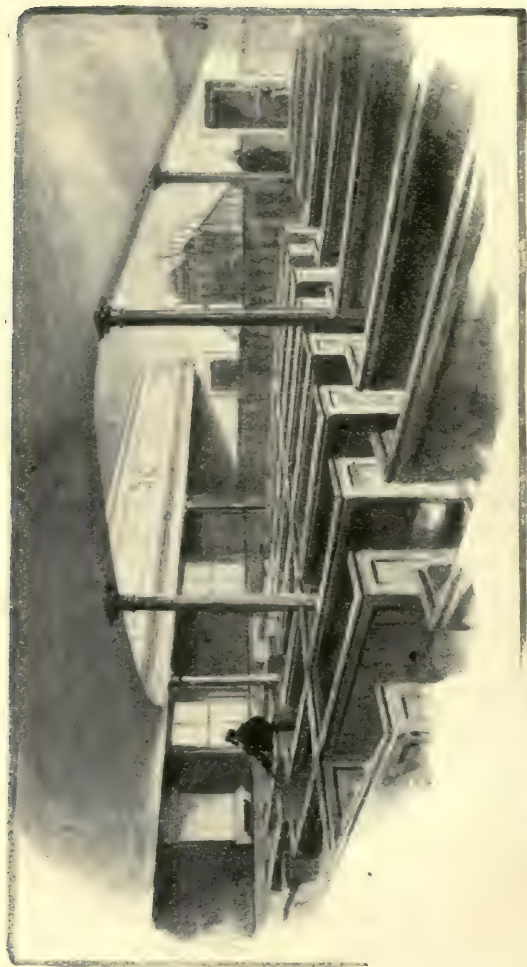
word 'Look!' what a charming word it seemed to me! Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the precious blood of Christ and the simple faith which looks alone to Him.

"That happy day when I found the Saviour and learned to cling to His dear feet was a day never to be forgotten by me. An obscure child, unknown, unheard of, I listened to the Word of God; and that precious text led me to the cross of Christ. I can testify that the joy of that day was utterly indescribable. I could have leaped, I could have danced; there was no expression, however fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of my spirit at that hour. Many days of Christian experience have passed since then, but there has never been one which has had the full exhilaration, the sparkling delight which that first day had. I thought I could have sprung from the seat on which I sat, and have called out with the wildest of those Methodist brethren who were present, 'I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of grace! A sinner saved by blood.' I felt that I was an emancipated soul, an heir of Heaven, a forgiven one, accepted in Christ Jesus, plucked out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit; with my feet upon a rock and my goings established! I thought I could dance all the way home. I could understand what John Bunyan meant when he declared he wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land all about his conversion."

The great event took place on the morning of Sunday, January 6th, 1850, and naturally, repeated efforts have been made to discover who the preacher was. It is a

remarkable fact that no fewer than three persons claimed to have occupied the pulpit on the occasion, but C. H. Spurgeon did not recognize any one of them as the man to whom he listened on the memorable day. Mr. Danzy Sheen, a Primitive Methodist minister, expended a good deal of time and took much trouble to settle the question, and he published the result of his researches in a little book called "Pastor Spurgeon: his Conversion, Labour and Success." Here he pointed out that on a certain Sunday in 1850 the Rev. Robert Eaglen, the Primitive Methodist minister travelling in the Ipswich Circuit in 1850-51, preached in the Artillery Street Chapel from the text, "Look unto Me and be ye saved." A snowstorm delayed his arrival at the chapel considerably beyond the time of starting the service, and the circumstances were so like those of the day on which C. H. Spurgeon was converted that it was thought Mr. Eaglen must be the preacher, whom the troubled youth heard. Still more circumstantial evidence was given by Mr. John Blomfield, a local preacher of Colchester, who was present when Mr. Eaglen preached. But the whole of the argument collapsed after C. H. Spurgeon declared the date of his conversion, for the day on which Mr. Eaglen preached in the circumstances referred to above was December 15th, 1850, nearly a year after Charles Haddon Spurgeon's visit to Artillery Street Chapel. It is not surprising, therefore, that when introduced to Mr. Eaglen C. H. Spurgeon did not recognize him as the preacher who had pointed at him from the pulpit.

The event was too vividly impressed upon Charles Haddon Spurgeon's mind, and his account of it is too detailed, for him to have made any mistake through lapse of memory, and there can be no doubt that as he states the



Interior of the Artillery Street Chapel, Colchester, showing tablet over the pew in which
C. H. Spurgeon sat on January 6, 1850.

preacher was "a poor, uneducated man, a man who had never received any training for the ministry, and probably will never be heard of in this life, a man engaged in business, no doubt, of a humble kind during the week."

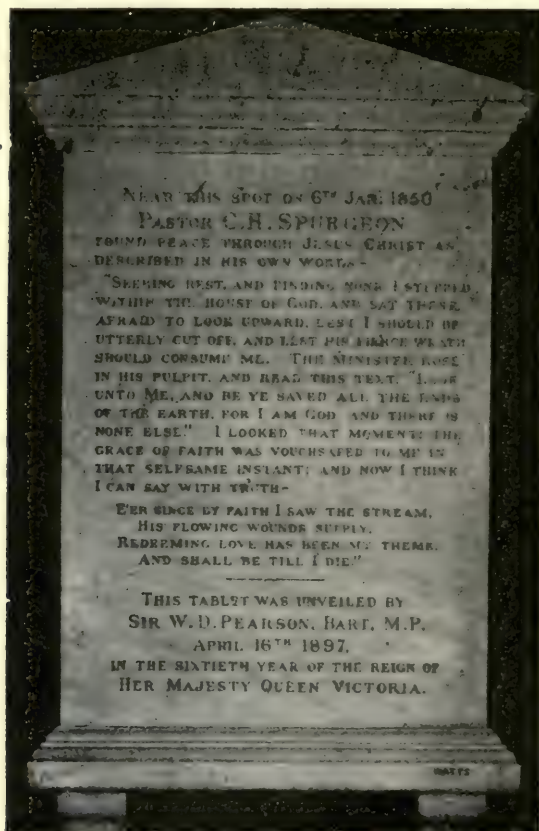
C. H. Spurgeon visited the Artillery Street Chapel on October 11th, 1864, and, preaching from the momentous text, Isaiah xlv. 22, he pointed to a seat on the left of the building, under the gallery, and said, "I was sitting in that pew when I was converted." A memorial tablet has since been erected over the pew, with an inscription setting forth the facts.

In his conversion, the great preacher has declared the point lay in making the discovery that he had nothing to do but to look to Christ. As a child he had listened attentively to all the sermons he heard, but either the way of salvation was not set forth, which can scarcely have been the case, or else he was spiritually blind and deaf to the fact. The news that he was, as a sinner, to look away from himself to Christ, as much startled him and came as fresh to him as any news he ever heard in his life.

On the evening of that memorable Sunday the youth attended a Baptist chapel in Colchester, and listened to a sermon from the text, "Accepted in the Beloved." It was exactly suited to his spiritual requirements and did much to confirm him in the faith. On his return to the family circle all noticed his joyousness, and that night after the others had retired to rest he told his father the great news, much to that parent's joy and thankfulness.

In the days immediately following, however, his own happiness was not unmarred by sorrow. When he was converted he most emphatically believed that he was going to live a perfect life, but very soon discovered that Cowper's line, "And cut up all my follies by the root," was not

true in fact. The follies began to sprout again, and to the mirth and joy following conversion succeeded a sad



The tablet in Artillery Street Chapel commemorating the conversion of C. H. Spurgeon and marking the pew where he sat on January 6, 1850.

fit of despondency. The youth went to the Primitive Methodist chapel where the light had first shone into his

soul, to see if he could there learn something that should meet his need. The preacher took as his text, "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death," and went on to say that no child of God ever did feel any conflict within. Such theology not only seemed unscriptural, but certainly failed to satisfy young Spurgeon's requirements. The lad knew for certain that he was saved, and he knew also that there was a very great conflict within, so he took up his hat and left the chapel. But it was not only despondency that troubled him in those early days of Christian life. He was again sorely tempted by blasphemous and profane thoughts that came to his mind in spite of himself, and he had once more to place his hand upon his mouth to avoid uttering them.

CHAPTER VI.

BAPTISM, CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, AND CHRISTIAN SERVICE.

IMMEDIATELY after his conversion the young usher had to return to his duties at Newmarket, and it was not long before he commenced to work for his Master. Within a week or so he was regularly distributing tracts at thirty-three houses in the town, having taken over a district formerly served by two ladies living in the house of Mr. Swindell. "Oh, how I wish that I could do something for Christ!" he wrote home to his mother on February 19. "Tract distribution is so pleasant and easy that it is a nothing—nothing in itself, much less when it is compared with the amazing debt of gratitude I owe." He also placed specially-chosen tracts, suitable to individual cases, in envelopes, and then sealing these up sent them to persons he knew, in the hope that God would bless the little printed sheets. After a time the youth became bolder, and as he went from house to house distributing tracts he began to tell in humble language the truths of Christ's salvation. This led him to take up Sunday-school work, a more trying task for a young convert in those days than in these. If his lesson became at all dull the scholars would begin playing, using the forms on which they sat as a gymnasium. "That was a very plain intimation to me," said C. H. Spurgeon, "that I must give them an illustration or an anecdote," and thus by being obliged

to tell stories, in order to secure the attention of his class, he learned that inimitable method of illustration which characterized his preaching in after years. As a result of his success in the class the superintendent asked him to address the whole Sunday School, and on June 11 he wrote home to his mother: "I have had two opportunities of addressing the Sunday School children, and have endeavoured to do so as a dying being to dying beings." His wonderful gift of oratory soon became manifest, and the older people took to attending school when Charles Haddon Spurgeon was speaking, so that before long the auditory looked more like a chapel than a school—a circumstance which the old pastor, jealous of the seeming invasion of his province, did not quite like. 'I always spoke as best I could,' says C. H. Spurgeon, "after carefully preparing my subject. 'Though only a youth,' I said, 'I think I am bound to give myself unto reading and study and prayer, and not to grieve the Spirit by unthought-of effusions'; and I soon found that my hearers appreciated what I said. Oh, but how earnestly I did it all! I often think that I spoke better then than I did in later years, for I spoke so tremblingly, but my heart went with it all."

Soon after he took charge of a Sunday School class he began to find his way into the homes of his scholars by calling at certain times to teach them writing, and the copies set always contained the Gospel. His kindness won the hearts of the parents, and many a time this earnest youth of sixteen was able to explain the way of salvation to older people, whose interest he had secured by his ingenious method of reaching them through the children. Every means within his power was used to spread a knowledge of the Gospel, and no stone was left unturned to get new scholars to attend the Sunday School. When he felt he

could do nothing else, he would write texts on little slips of paper and drop them about the streets and roads that some might pick them up and receive them as messages of mercy to their souls. "I could scarcely content myself," he says, "even for five minutes, without trying to do something for Christ. If I walked along the street, I must have a few tracts with me; if I went into a railway carriage, I must drop a tract out of the window; if I had a moment's leisure, I must be upon my knees or at my Bible; if I were in company, I must turn the subject of conversation to Christ, that I might serve my Master."

C. H. Spurgeon's letters to his parents at this time make it clear that two things forcibly presented themselves to him as duties not to be neglected or delayed by a young Christian. One was baptism by immersion, and the other church membership. On the former question he had long since made up his mind as to what the Scriptures taught; but before going through the ceremony he thought it right to secure his parents' consent. "I firmly believe and consider," he wrote to his father on January 30, 1850, just after his return from Newmarket, "that baptism is the command of Christ, and shall not feel quite comfortable if I do not receive it. I am unworthy of such things, but so am I unworthy of Jesus' love. I hope I have received the blessing of the one and think I ought to take the other also."

Again, on February 19th, in a letter to his mother, he says, "I have come to a resolution that by God's help I will profess the name of Jesus as soon as possible, if I may be admitted into His Church on earth. It is an honour—no difficulty. Grandfather encourages me to do so, and I hope to do so both as a duty and privilege. I trust that I shall then feel that the bonds of the Lord are

upon me and have a more powerful sense of my duty to walk circumspectly. Conscience has convinced me that it is a duty to be buried with Christ in baptism, although I am sure it constitutes no part of salvation. I am very glad that you have no objection to my doing so. Mr. Swindell is a Baptist." His father had been very careful before giving his consent to the ceremony to assure himself that his son had no leaning whatever towards the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. There was no Baptist Church in Newmarket, and so the public testimony of faith had to be postponed for a time. A delay also occurred, though of less duration, in securing church membership at the Independent Chapel. Four successive days the young usher called upon the minister but was unable to see him, and then he acted with his characteristic persistence, in what he believed to be right, by writing to the minister and declaring that he would go down to the church meeting and propose himself as a member. "He looked upon me as a strange character," says C. H. Spurgeon, "but I meant what I said; for I felt that I could not be happy without fellowship with the people of God. I wanted to be wherever they were; and if anybody ridiculed them, I wished to be ridiculed with them; and if people had an ugly name for them I wanted to be called by that ugly name; for I felt that unless I suffered with Christ in His humiliation I could not expect to reign with Him in His glory."

The outcome of his importunity to the dilatory minister was that Charles Haddon Spurgeon was proposed for membership at a church meeting early in March, 1850, and although there was again a delay in sending brethren to visit him, he was duly admitted a member on Thursday, April 4. "Oh, that I may henceforth live more for the

glory of Him by whom I feel assured that I shall be everlastingly saved!" he wrote to his father in announcing the news. "Owing to my scruples on account of baptism I did not sit down at the Lord's Table, and cannot in conscience do so until I am baptized. To one who does not see the necessity of baptism it is perfectly right and proper to partake of this blessed privilege; but were *I* to do so, I conceive it would be to tumble over the wall, since I feel persuaded it is Christ's appointed way of professing Him." Again. "Since last Thursday I have been unwell in body, but I may say that my soul has been almost in heaven." At this time he evidently had an ardent desire to become a preacher, for in the same letter to his father he says, "How I long for the time when it may please God to make me like you, my father, a successful preacher of the Gospel. I almost envy you your exalted privilege."

The benefits of church fellowship could not be enjoyed to the full until the young member was able to participate in the Lord's Supper, and from this he felt bound to abstain until he had been baptized. There was, therefore, every incentive to undergo the ordinance with the least possible delay. On inquiry young Spurgeon found that the nearest Baptist Chapel was at Isleham, distant about eight miles from Newmarket, and he was not long in communicating with the minister, Mr. W. W. Cantlow, a former Jamaican missionary, who arranged to baptize him on May 3, his mother's birthday.

In a letter to his mother, two days before the event, he said, "Your birthday will now be doubly memorable, for on the third of May the boy for whom you have so often prayed, the boy of hopes and fears, your firstborn, will join the visible Church of the redeemed on earth, and

will bind himself doubly to the Lord his God by open profession. You, my mother, have been the great means in God's hand of rendering me what I hope I am. Your kind warning Sabbath-evening addresses were too deeply settled on my heart to be forgotten. You, by God's blessing, prepared the way for the preached Word, and



The Rev. W. W. Cantlow, who baptized
C. H. Spurgeon in the River Lark at Isleham.

for that holy book *The Rise and Progress*. If I have any courage, if I feel prepared to follow my Saviour not only into the water, but should He call me even into the fire, I love you as the preacher to my heart of such courage, as my praying, watching mother."

The memorable day arrived. The young convert had obtained leave of absence from his teaching duties, and rising early he spent a couple of hours in prayer before walking, in company with a younger lad, to Isleham. "What a walk it was!" he says, "what thoughts and prayers thronged my soul during that morning's journey." The weather was far from warm, and the Isleham Baptists carried out the ordinance not in their church-building but by the ferry on the river Lark. Indeed, all the Baptists in that district performed the solemn rite in the open-air, and the river in the course of seven or eight miles served no fewer than five churches. Naturally a baptism drew a large crowd of spectators together on either bank, and the ordeal was therefore no small one for a young Christian to go through.

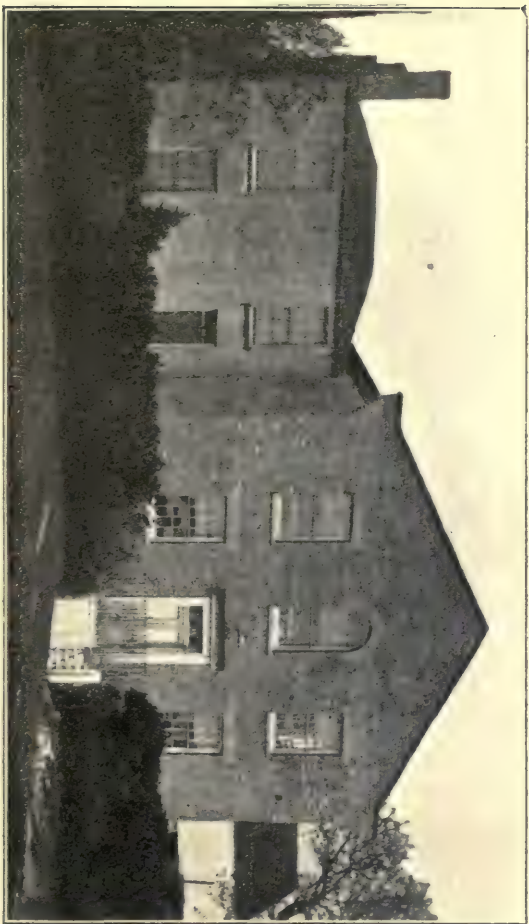
Arrived at Mr. Cantlow's house, C. H. Spurgeon was greatly cheered by the sight of the minister's smiling face, and after a talk over the open confession which the youth was to make the couple walked down to the ferry, half a mile from the village. The ferry-house was always freely placed at the disposal of the minister and candidates at a baptizing, and here a short service was held prior to the immersion. The youth, however, was unable to follow the proceedings closely, for, he tells us, his thoughts were in the water, sometimes with his Lord in joy, sometimes with himself in trembling awe at making so public a confession. Two young women were to be baptized at the same time—Diana Wilkinson and Eunice Fuller—and C. H. Spurgeon was asked to conduct them through the water to the minister, but never having seen a baptism before he timidly declined, for fear of making a mistake. So far as natural circumstances went there was much to hold back the young convert from his bold confession. The method of



Islaham Ferry on the River Lark, where C. H. Spurgeon was baptized, May 3, 1850.

procedure was unknown to him, the wind blew down the river with a cutting blast, and at every available place on either shore, on the ferry-boat and even in row-boats, along the river curious spectators had gathered to see the youth immersed. For a moment he felt nervous, but after walking a few steps into the water he experienced an inward joy and delight at being able to make so open a confession, and felt as if Heaven and earth and hell might all gaze upon him, for he was not ashamed there and then to own himself "a follower of the Lamb." "My timidity was washed away," he declared many years afterwards, "it floated down the river into the sea, and must have been devoured by the fishes, for I never felt anything of the kind since. Baptism also loosed my tongue, and from that day it has never been quiet. I lost a thousand fears in that River Lark, and found that in keeping His commandments there is great reward." A happy evening was spent with Mr. Cantlow and other friends round a peat-fire in the chapel vestry, where a prayer-meeting was held, and young Spurgeon so prayed that the people who heard him marvelled greatly and wept for joy.

All through his life C. H. Spurgeon was very emphatic in declaring explicitly his belief as to baptism. "If any ask why I was baptized," he once said, "I answer because I believed it to be an ordinance of Christ very specially joined by Him with faith in His Name. 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' I had no superstitious idea that baptism would save me, for I was saved. I did not seek to have sin washed away by water, for I believed that my sins were forgiven me through faith in Christ Jesus. Yet I regarded baptism as the token to the believer of cleansing, the emblem of his burial with his Lord, and the outward avowal of his new birth. I

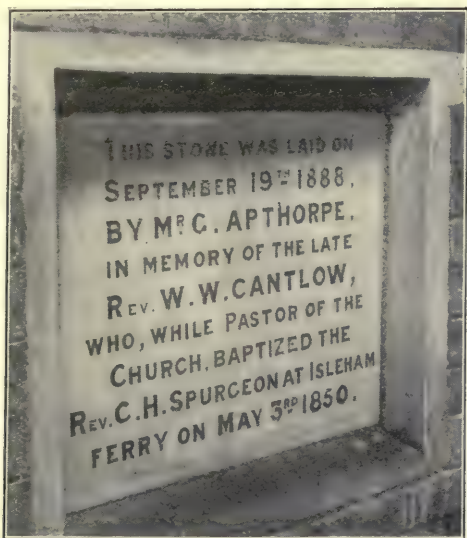


The Baptist Chapel and Manse at Isleham.

did not trust in it ; but because I trusted in Jesus as my Saviour I felt bound to obey Him as my Lord and follow the example which He set us in Jordan in His own baptism. I did not fulfil the outward ordinance to join a party and become a Baptist, but to be a Christian after the apostolic fashion ; for they, when they believed, were baptized."

One of the most interesting documents relating to this period which has been left by C. H. Spurgeon is a diary commenced two days after he had been admitted to Church fellowship at Newmarket, and continued to June 20th, 1850. The journal is prefaced by six important dates in the writer's spiritual career, and is headed : "1850—A blessed year of Jubilee." In this little book Charles Haddon Spurgeon lays bare his soul, and records with vivid accuracy the spiritual experiences he was passing through. Again he had those alternations of depression and cheerfulness. On April 9th, he writes, "Happy again to-day ; if such days continue earth and Heaven will be but one." Three days later we read, "Earthly things have engaged too much of my thoughts this day. I have not been able to fix my attention entirely upon my Saviour. Yet, even yet, the Lord has not hidden His face from me." On April 16th he was more self-condemnatory. "I am now getting drowsy in spirit. Strong Deliverer, keep my eyes open ! My soul seems to long after the fleshpots of Egypt, and that after eating Heavenly manna ; help and forgive me, O my Saviour." On the following day : "There is a little cloud betwixt me and my Sun of righteousness, but I doubt not that He still shines upon me." From the next entry we judge the depression to have been less. "I trust the cloud has burst. I have seen some few gleams of sunshine to-day. . . . I have been

able to renew my strength"; but on April 19th the trouble had returned: "I do not live near enough to God. I have to lament my coldness and indifference in the ways of the Lord." Again, on April 20th, "Went round with my tracts; could not feel the Spirit of the Lord upon me. I seemed to have a clog upon my feet



Inscription on the Memorial Stone of the new school-room adjoining Isleham Chapel.

and my tongue. I have richly deserved this, for I have not prayed or studied my Bible as I ought." But a bright change soon followed. The next day, Sunday, he declares, "On the whole I have much enjoyed this day," and on Monday at the prayer meeting he engaged in prayer publicly for the first time.

As his baptism drew near his faith grew stronger. After an entry on April 26th, "How my father's fears that I should *trust* to baptism stir up my soul! My God, Thou knowest that I hate such a thought," he writes on the 27th: "Fear begone! Doubts fall back. In the name of the Lord of hosts I would set up my banner. Come on ye demons of the pit; my Captain is more than a match for you; in His name, armed with His weapons and in His strength I dare defy you all. How glorious 'twould be to die by the side of such a Leader." The day before his baptism he wrote, "To-morrow will be a solemn day," and after the ceremony was over we find the entry, "Blest pool! Sweet emblem of my death to all the world! May I, henceforward, live alone for Jesus! Accept my body and soul as a poor sacrifice, tie me unto Thee; in Thy strength I now devote myself to Thy service for ever; never may I shrink from owning Thy Name.

'Witness ye men and angels now,
If I forsake the Lord!'"

So the diary goes on. Sometimes there is an entry to this effect, "I have again to confess my lukewarmness; I fear I am losing my first love. Coldness and deadness seem to be natural to me; I have no inward warmth." Or like this, "How feeble I am. I am not able to keep myself near to God. I am compelled to own my own deadness," whilst at another time we read, "Glorious day; happy were all like this!" and "Enjoyed an ecstasy of delight. I seemed transported and able to fly beyond the bounds of this poor atom of an earth. Spiritual realities were present to view, while the flesh, like Abraham's servant, tarried at the foot of the mountain." And, be it remembered, the writer was a youth not yet sixteen years of age!

But the distress, caused by his own supposed lukewarmness, was not the only trouble which disturbed C. H. Spurgeon's peace of mind. Even at this early age we find him the subject of slander. Under date May 4th is the entry: "There is a report in the church that Mr. S. and I have been on the heath. Mr. A. told me of it very gruffly. Mr. H. will not commune because so many have been to the races. My Master knows I have no need to tell Him I am innocent. Though I be cast out and rejected of the disciples, the Lord will not cast off one of His chosen. I can in this respect wash my hands in innocency." The lack of earnestness in his fellow Sunday School teachers, too, caused him much sorrow. On May 8th he writes: "Teachers' business meeting. Too much joking and levity to agree with my notions of what a Sunday School teacher should be. Lord keep me from the evil of the world, let me not be led away; but if these are Thy people, help me to serve Thee better than they and to be more like my Master." Four weeks later an entry reads: "Teachers' meeting after the service. What a want of spirituality and vital godliness!" It is not difficult to understand how wrong this spirit of levity must have appeared to a youth who, after attending at the deathbed of one of his scholars, could not but think everybody a fool for doing anything except preparing to die. The solemnity of death made him look upon the men who drove the carts in the street, those who were busy at their shops and those who were selling their wares as being all foolish for heeding anything except their eternal destiny, and he regarded himself as most of all foolish for not pointing dying sinners to a living Christ.

It is clear from the entries in the diary that the church at Newmarket was in a very dead condition. The various

services were poorly attended, and there was an absence of interest in those Christian activities which should always characterize a church that is alive to its own needs and the needs of the people around. Charles Haddon Spurgeon's removal to Cambridge, in August, 1850, was therefore of benefit to him in his spiritual as well as in his intellectual



(Starr & Rignall, photo, Cambridge.)

The house in Cambridge, formerly a school, where Charles Haddon Spurgeon acted as usher.

life. He left Newmarket on June 17th, and paid a visit to his grandfather at Stambourne, with whom he had much pleasant and helpful intercourse respecting religious matters, and at the close of the summer vacation proceeded to the University city to become usher in the school of Mr.

Leeding, a former teacher of his at Colchester. The new surroundings and acquaintanceship were congenial. In Mr. Leeding's household it was the custom at eight o'clock every morning for each person, from the master to the servants, to spend half an hour in prayer and meditation in his or her chamber, a privilege which the young usher highly appreciated. Then he found in the St. Andrew Street Baptist Chapel, once the scene of the Rev. Robert Hall's labours, a church full of life and activity, with plenty of opportunity for a young convert to engage in Christian service. The first Sunday he participated in the Communion of the Lord's Supper there, his characteristic honesty and bluntness led to an amusing incident. A gentleman sat in the same pew as himself, and, at the close of the service, C. H. Spurgeon asked him if he was well. "You have the advantage of me," said the gentleman, looking at the bold youth before him. "I don't think I have," replied young Spurgeon, unabashed, "for you and I are brothers." "I don't quite know what you mean," said the gentleman. "Well," replied C. H. Spurgeon, "when I took the bread and wine just now in token of our being one in Christ I meant it, did not you?" By this time they were in the street. Stepping before the strange youth the astonished church member put his hands on young Spurgeon's shoulders and exclaimed: "Oh, sweet simplicity!" Then he added, "You are quite right, my dear brother, you are quite right; come in to tea with me. I am afraid I should not have spoken to you if you had not first addressed me." That afternoon C. H. Spurgeon went to tea with the gentleman, and a close friendship sprang up which lasted to the time of the great preacher's death.

The young usher had been in Cambridge only a week or

two when he took charge of a class in the Sunday School, and from time to time addressed the whole of the scholars and teachers. His youth and ability attracted the attention and roused the interest of the church officials, and he was encouraged to join the Lay Preachers' Association, founded in connection with St. Andrew Street Chapel by



(Starr & Rignall, photo, Cambridge.)

St. Andrew Street Chapel, Cambridge, the officials of which first sent out Charles Haddon Spurgeon to preach in the villages round the town.

the Rev. Robert Hall. This association provided preachers for the various villages round Cambridge, and C. H. Spurgeon had only been domiciled in the city a month or two when he was appointed to take a village service regularly each Sunday. There had been some

difficulty in getting him to preach, so great was his diffidence, and the story of his first sermon is well worth repeating in his own words.

"I had, one Saturday, finished morning school and the boys were all going home for the half-holiday, when in came the aforesaid 'Bishop' (Mr. James Vinter, known among local Nonconformists as 'Bishop' Vinter) to ask me to go over to Teversham the next evening, for a young man was to preach there who was not much used to services and very likely would be glad of company. That was a cunningly-devised sentence, if I remember rightly—and I think I do; for at the time, in the light of that Sunday evening's revelation, I turned it over and vastly admired its ingenuity. A request to go and preach would have met with a decided negative; but merely to act as company to a good brother who did not like to be lonely, and perhaps might ask me to give out a hymn or to pray, was not a difficult matter, and the request understood in that fashion was cheerfully complied with. Little did the lad know what Jonathan and David were doing when he was made to run for the arrow, and as little did I know when I was cajoled into accompanying a young man to Teversham.

"My Sunday School work was over, tea had been taken, and I set off through Barmwell and away along the Newmarket Road with a gentleman some few years my senior. We talked of good things, and at last I expressed my hope that he would feel the presence of God while preaching. He seemed to start, and assured me that he had never preached in his life and could not attempt such a thing, he was looking to his young friend, Mr. Spurgeon, for that. This was a new view of the situation, and I could only reply that I was no minister; and that even if

I had been I was quite unprepared. My companion only repeated that he, in a still more emphatic sense, was not a preacher, that he would help me in any other part of the service, but that there would be no sermon unless I delivered one. He told me that if I repeated one of my Sunday School addresses it would just suit the poor people, and would probably give them more satisfaction than the studied sermon of a learned divine. I felt that I



The cottage at Teversham where in 1850 C. H. Spurgeon, as a lad of sixteen, preached his first sermon.

was fairly committed to do my best. I walked along quietly, lifting up my soul to God, and it seemed to me that I could surely tell a few poor cottagers of the sweetness and love of Jesus, for I felt them in my own soul. Praying for Divine help I resolved to make the attempt. My text should be, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious," and I could trust the Lord to open my mouth in honour of His dear Son. It seemed a

great risk and a serious trial; but depending upon the Power of the Holy Ghost, I would at least tell out the story of the cross and not allow the people to go home without a word.

"We entered the low-pitched room of the thatched cottage, where a few simple-minded farm labourers and their wives were gathered together; we sang and prayed and read the Scriptures, and then came my first sermon. How long or how short it was I cannot now remember. It was not half such a task as I had feared it would be, but I was glad to see my way to a fair conclusion and to the giving out of the last hymn. To my own delight I had not broken down, nor stopped short in the middle, nor been destitute of ideas, and the desired haven was in view. I made a finish and took up the hymn book; but to my astonishment an aged voice cried out, 'Bless your dear heart, how old are you?' My very solemn reply was, 'You must wait till the service is over before making any such inquiries. Let us now sing.' We did sing. The young preacher pronounced the benediction, and then there began a dialogue which enlarged into a warm, friendly talk, in which everybody appeared to take part. 'How old are you?' was the leading question. 'I am under sixty,' was the reply. 'Yes, and under sixteen,' was the old lady's rejoinder. 'Never mind my age; think of the Lord Jesus and His preciousness,' was all that I could say, after promising to come again if the gentlemen at Cambridge thought me fit to do so." Such was the beginning of that wonderful ministry, which was to last over forty years and be of world-wide note and usefulness.

After this the young usher's name was placed upon the plan of village preachers, and he was no week without an appointment. He used to walk out six or eight miles to



Interior of the cottage at Teversham where
Charles Haddon Spurgeon's first
sermon was preached.

fulfil his engagements and then walk back again. His dress was similar to that which he wore on the first occasion at Teversham—round jacket with broad turn-down white collar, trousers to the ankles and large peaked cap. If the weather was wet he would put on waterproof leggings, mackintosh overcoat and a hat with a waterproof covering, whilst in order to find his way across the fields in the dark a lantern was necessary. On one occasion before he could reach his destination a severe thunder-storm occurred, and passing a cottage on the road he noticed a woman who seemed to be greatly alarmed by the lightning and thunder. The youth felt he could not leave a fellow-creature in distress, so he entered the home, read a few verses of Scripture, and prayed with the woman until she was comforted. Continuing his journey to the village he found that the people were not expecting a service as it was thought the storm would prevent the preacher travelling from Cambridge. But the young usher was nothing daunted. He went round quickly from house to house, invited the people to come to the regular meeting-place, and gathered a larger congregation than usual. On another occasion, going home late from a preaching engagement, he saw standing by the side of a lonely foot-path, a gaunt and ghostly object with outstretched arms. The surroundings and circumstances were calculated to cause alarm, and for a moment the youth believed he was face to face with a supernatural being. But the next moment he had jumped a ditch and grasped the object, which proved to be nothing more dreadful than an old tree that some wag had covered with whitewash to frighten simple folk. The low pitched rooms of small cottages were not ideal places for crowded gatherings, and often did C. H. Spurgeon see the candles burn dimly for want of air, a

circumstance to which he has referred in his "Sermons in Candles." Once when preaching in a little village chapel the youth had a candle on each side of him in the front of the pulpit. Warming to his subject his gestures became somewhat vigorous, and an unfortunate wave of the hand knocked one candle from its place "It fell," says the preacher, "upon the bald head of a friend below, who looked up with an expression which I can see at this moment, and it makes me smile still. I took no more notice of the accident than to weave it into what I was saying; and I believe most of my hearers considered it to have been a striking practical illustration of the remark which accompanied it, 'How soon is the glory of life dashed down!'"

From the first C. H. Spurgeon's ability as a preacher was evident, and yet at this very time there were not wanting those who dissuaded him from preaching. Fortunately, however, their counsel was outweighed by the judgment of persons of wider experience. In the open-air he was as successful as inside a building, and at all times his earnestness was most marked. "Souls, souls, souls,—I hope this rings in my ears and hurries me on," he wrote to a friend, and that was, indeed, his burden throughout his long ministry.

It must not be supposed that his Sunday School work and his numerous preaching engagements were allowed to interfere with his teaching duties or his studies. Mr. Leeding's letters were filled with praise of the young usher, and had it not been for the fact that his Nonconformity debarred him, he would doubtless have entered the University and taken a degree. Statements such as have been frequently made of C. H. Spurgeon's want of learning are as ridiculous as they are untrue. He was even at

this period a proficient Latin, Greek, and mathematical scholar, and Mr. Leeding, a tutor of ability and discernment, expressly stated that he considered the young man sufficiently proficient in his studies to take a good place on the list, had the way been open, and to "win in a canter." And yet even after C. H. Spurgeon's death, a prominent journal described the great preacher as "all but unlettered." Ignorance must be the charitable excuse for such a false statement.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST PASTORATE AT WATERBEACH.

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON was now seventeen years of age, and his remarkable gifts made him the most acceptable of all the young men sent out by the Cambridge Lay Preachers' Association into the villages surrounding the University town. Never a Sunday passed but what he was preaching somewhere, and in the autumn of 1851 he paid his first visit to Waterbeach, afterwards memorable as being the scene of his maiden pastorate. The village boasted a chapel, a curious little structure with a thatched roof, that had once been a dovecote, and was purchased by the local Baptists for a hundred pounds. It had a bricked floor, below the level of the road, and the pews were of the old-fashioned high-backed kind, whilst on the fronts of the galleries and on the square posts supporting them were placed hooks for the garments of the worshippers. In front of the pulpit, a lofty structure of the "wine-glass" order, stood a long table, at the end of which, immediately under the preacher, sat the precentor, with the musicians down each side, and during the sermon these would rest their instruments upon the table.

It was the custom at Waterbeach Chapel for any worshipper who might feel drowsy to keep himself awake by standing up, and it must have been indeed a curious sight to witness the worshippers one after another rising in their places to prevent themselves from falling asleep

during dull sermons delivered by prosy divines. At the offering of prayer, too, every member of the Waterbeach congregation used to stand with his back to the pulpit, leaning forward over the rear of the pew, an attitude regarded as particularly devotional. Such was the quaint little church to which Charles Haddon Spurgeon went for the first time in 1851. One of the deacons, Mr. Coe, many



Old Waterbeach Chapel, the scene of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's first pastorate.

years afterwards thus described the visit of the young preacher :—

“He sat on one side of the table-pew and I on the other side. I shall never forget it. He looked so white, and I thought to myself, *he'll* never be able to preach—what a boy he is. I despised his youth, you know, and

thought all this, while the congregation was singing. Then when the hymn was over, he jumped up and began to read and expound the chapter about the Scribes and Pharisees and lawyers, and as he went on about their garments, their phylacteries, and long prayers, I knew that *he* could preach." He did preach, and after one or two more visits the deacons asked him to become their pastor. The church was poor and could not afford to pay an adequate salary, but C. H. Spurgeon was not seeking worldly riches, and feeling that the call was from God, he accepted it and became minister of Waterbeach Chapel, with its forty members. At the same time, to obtain the wherewithal to live without want, he continued his work as usher at Cambridge, and it is surprising that so young a lad was able to teach all the week, preach three sermons full of power and original thought on Sunday, and address village congregations almost every evening from Monday to Saturday, without breaking down in health. But young Spurgeon's heart was in the work, and what might have been a labour to another was a delight and a pleasure to him. A few weeks of such a ministry were sufficient to revive the cause. All the empty seats were taken, the aisles were filled with standing listeners, and crowds of country folk, some of whom had driven or walked in from a distance, surrounded the doors unable to gain admittance. The increased prosperity of the church brought an increased income, and after a time the young minister gave up his position as usher and received a salary from the church of forty-five pounds a year, which was supplemented by gifts in kind. "I do not think," he says, "there was a pig killed by any one of the congregation without my having some portion of it, and one or other of them, when coming to the market at Cam-

bridge, would bring me bread, so that I had enough bread and meat to pay my rent with, and I often paid my landlady in that fashion." An extra gift of money, too, would occasionally reach the young minister from an unexpected source, one of the most remarkable of such cases being when a miser, never before known to give anything,



The earliest known portrait of Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

presented C. H. Spurgeon with seven-and-sixpence for the purchase of a much-needed hat. Everyone was surprised at the extravagance and generosity of the miser, but the explanation was forthcoming on the following Sunday, when the man went to the minister and asked to be prayed for, that he might be saved from the

sin of covetousness, "for," said he, "the Lord told me to give you half-a-sovereign, but I kept back half-a-crown, and I can't rest of a night for thinking of it." "Oh, if that's the case," said young Spurgeon, "you can easily set the matter right," and the remaining half-a-crown was at once handed over.

Waterbeach, with its surrounding district, at the advent of the youthful preacher, seems to have been notorious for its drunkards, gamblers, Sabbath-breakers, and ne'er-do-weels of every type and kind. It was, in fact, one of the worst rural districts in England, and C. H. Spurgeon himself testified that there had been "robberies and villainies of every kind all round the neighbourhood." But as in the church, so in the district, an extraordinary change was witnessed within a very short time. The biggest vagabonds of the village were "weeping floods of tears," and those who had been the curse of the parish became its blessing. Crime ceased because the criminals were themselves in the house of God, "rejoicing to hear of Jesus crucified," and of an evening, from almost every cottage, the sound of hymn-singing might be heard. This wonderful change in the character of the district, which has lasted even till now, was all the result of the ministry of the youth from Cambridge. Charles Haddon Spurgeon's secret then, as ever afterwards, was his absolute dependence upon God and his whole-hearted earnestness and zeal. A typical instance of the latter occurred on his first visit to Waterbeach. He was put up for the night at the house of Mr. Smith, and shared a bed with Mr. Smith's son, then a young boy. Before retiring, C. H. Spurgeon went upon his knees, but his companion tumbled into bed without prayer and lay down. No sooner had young Spurgeon finished his devotions than he inquired

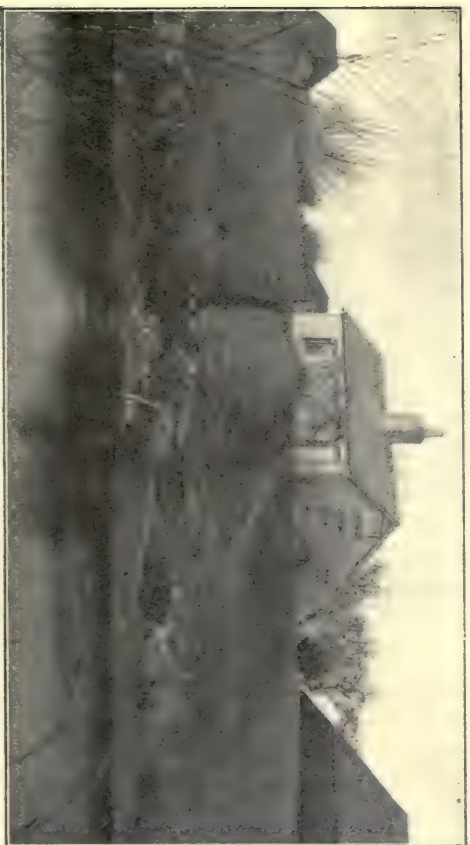


(Starb & Rigall, photo, Cambridge.)

The house of Mr. Smith in which Charles Haddon Spurgeon slept on his first night at Waterbeach.

of his bedfellow if he were not afraid to go to bed without asking God for protection during the night. "What a fearful thing would it be," he said, "if you went to your last sleep without a prayer and a Saviour." For an hour or more the young preacher talked to the boy, and his earnestness was so evident that the boy was moved. The youthful preacher had him out of bed and prayed with him, and that night the lad was converted. He is now an honoured deacon at Waterbeach. The same boy was sleeping with C. H. Spurgeon on another occasion, when in the early hours the young preacher, in great distress, awoke his companion and told him that his mind was filled with thoughts of the Judgment. He described, as in a vision, the fiery torments of the lost and the ascending smoke of the wrath of God, and never will his listener forget that Saturday night, or, rather, Sunday morning. The matter was so laid upon the preacher's heart, that on the Sunday evening he embodied the thoughts in his sermon and preached the most terrible address ever delivered by him. The chapel was crowded, and as the young minister, appearing almost inspired, took his congregation to the verge of the bottomless pit he seemed to hold them over the awful brink and cause them to look into its seething, lurid depths, until strong men grew afraid and cried for mercy, and women sobbed and fainted. The memory of that dreadful picture, painted before their eyes, startles those who were present in the chapel, even to this day.

The youth was not content merely to preach to those who cared to enter the chapel; he would go out into the streets and lanes, reproving the idlers and the flagrant sinners, and by his very earnestness compelling them to attend the services. Sunday after Sunday was he seen

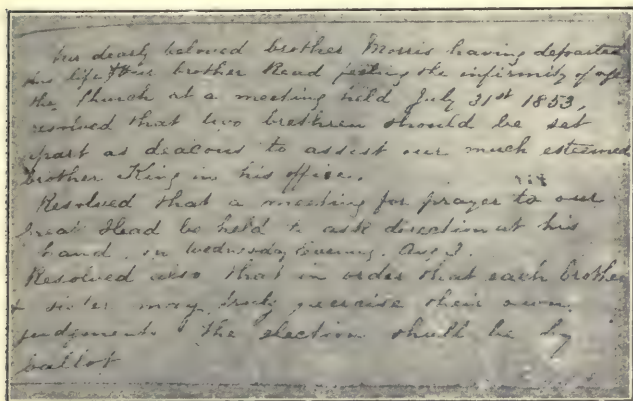


(Starr & Rignall, photo, Cambridge.)

The place of baptizing on the Cam used by Waterbeach Chapel. Charles Haddon Spurgeon often addressed large congregations here.

leading to the chapel a little crowd of men and boys whose thoughts had never before turned towards the house of God, and almost weekly some of this number were converted and entered upon respectable, God-fearing lives. Nothing like it had ever been known, and from miles round people who had heard of the "boy-preacher's" fame went to Waterbeach to see and hear him for themselves. But it was not fame that he sought; he wanted to see souls saved, lives changed, and the church a centre of blessing to the district round; and what joy was his when he heard of sinners being led to the Saviour through the instrumentality of his preaching! He tells us, "When I began to preach in the little thatched chapel at Waterbeach my first concern was, would God save any souls through me? They called me a ragged-headed boy, and I think I was just that. I know I wore a jacket. After I had preached for some little time I thought, 'This Gospel has saved me, but then somebody else preached it; will it save anybody else now that I preach it?' Some Sundays went over, and I used to say to the deacons, 'Have you heard of anybody finding the Lord under my ministry?' My good old friend and deacon said 'I am sure somebody must have received the Saviour; I am quite certain it is so.' 'Oh!' I answered, 'but I want to know it. I want to prove that it is so.' How my heart leaped for joy when I heard tidings of my first convert! I could never be satisfied with a full congregation and the kind expressions of friends; I longed to hear that hearts had been broken, that tears had been seen streaming from the eyes of penitents. How I did rejoice as one that findeth great spoil, one Sunday afternoon, when my good deacon said to me 'God has set his seal on your ministry in this place, sir.' Oh, if anybody had said to me, 'Someone has

left you twenty thousand pounds,' I should not have given a snap of my fingers for it, compared with the joy which I felt when I was told that God had saved a soul through my ministry! 'Who is it?' I asked. 'Oh, it is a poor labouring man's wife over at such and such a place. She went home broken-hearted by your sermon two or three Sundays ago, and she has been in great trouble of soul, but she has found peace and she says she would like to



(Starr & Rignall, photo, Cambridge.)

Reduced facsimile of an entry by C. H. Spurgeon in the
 Waterbeach Church Book.

‘speak to you.’ I said, ‘Will you drive me over there? I must go to see her’; and early on the Monday morning I was driving down to the village my deacon had mentioned to see my first spiritual child. I felt like the boy who has earned his first guinea, or like a diver who has been down to the depths of the sea and brought up a rare pearl.”

The tact of the young minister in dealing with difficult

problems that presented themselves, and with peculiar individuals with whom he came in contact, was remarkable even in these early days. A woman at Waterbeach, notorious as a virago, abused him one morning as he passed her gate, in language compared with which, he tells us, that of the typical Billingsgate fish-woman would have been nowhere. The youth had heard of this scold's weakness, and had already made up his mind how to act when she assailed him, so smiling he said, "Yes, thank you; I am quite well; I hope you are the same." Another outburst of vituperation followed, to which the minister replied, still smiling, "Yes, it does look rather as if it were going to rain; I think I had better be getting on." "Bless the man," she exclaimed, "he's as deaf as a post; what's the use of storming at him?"

A different case was that of a good old lady whom C. H. Spurgeon has described as Mrs. "Much-Afraid." She had been a believer in Christ for fifty years, but was always fearing that she would never enter the Gates of Heaven, and, although ever ready to help her neighbours, or to speak a word to the unconverted, she was always doubting and fearing about her own spiritual condition. One day when talking with the young minister she told him that she had not any hope at all; she had no faith; in fact she believed she was a hypocrite. "Then don't come to the chapel any more," replied C. H. Spurgeon, promptly, "we don't want hypocrites there. Why do you come?"

"I come because I can't stop away," said the old lady. "I love the people of God; I love the house of God; and I love to worship God."

"Well," said the preacher, "you are an odd sort of hypocrite; you are a queer kind of unconverted woman." He then offered to give her five pounds for her hope of

salvation if she would sell it, but although a moment before she had declared she had no hope, the old dame exclaimed, indignantly, "Why, I would not sell it for a thousand worlds."

At Waterbeach there were a good many people of an Antinomian tendency, but the young minister was a match



(Starr & Rignall, photo, Cambridge.)

The present Baptist Chapel at Waterbeach. The old building in which C. H. Spurgeon preached so often and with such ability, was burned to the ground.

for them all. One man of bad life had the hardihood and impudence to describe himself as one of God's dear children. "So you are," replied C. H. Spurgeon, "dear at any price, either to be given or thrown away." Another man said that he knew exactly how many children of God

there were in his parish; there were exactly five. The minister expressed curiosity to learn their names, so the man began by saying, "There is *myself*——" "Stop!" said young Spurgeon, "are you quite sure about the first one?"

In contrast with people of this stamp—apologists for sin—were some who claimed to be perfect and to live for months without sinning. One such asked the youthful minister to visit him so that he (C. H. Spurgeon) might receive valuable instruction. The preacher replied that he had no doubt about the benefits he would derive, but declared he did not like to go to the man's house as he was hardly likely to get into any of the rooms. "How is that?" inquired the puzzled individual. "Well," replied the minister, "I suppose that your house would be so full of angels that there would be no room for me!"

All the people at Waterbeach, however, were not of such types. Many true and loving friends were made in those early days, and sweet communion was enjoyed with kindred spirits. On no two occasions in the first year was he entertained for the week-end in the same house, and at the end of the twelvemonth there were still some invitations outstanding. Occasionally the minister would be corrected in some small matter by an elderly deacon, and when the reproof was apt and timely it was taken in a truly humble spirit and duly profited by. One rebuke which C. H. Spurgeon described as "well deserved and lovingly taken" was that of a Mr. King, who did not tell the young minister that he should speak more guardedly in the pulpit, but placed a pin in his Bible through the text, Titus ii. 8: "Sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." With mere fault-finders and hair-splitters, however, young Spurgeon



(Starr & Rignall, photo, Cambridge.)

Interior of the present Chapel at Waterbeach.

was not so docile. An amusing story is told of one man, Mayor of Cambridge at the time, who was often attempting to correct supposed mistakes made by the young preacher. On this occasion he expressed shocked surprise that the minister should have declared from the pulpit that were a thief to enter Heaven unregenerate, he would remain a thief still and would go round picking the angels' pockets. "My dear young man," said the Mayor in all seriousness, "don't you know that the angels haven't any pockets." "No, sir," replied C. H. Spurgeon, "I do not know that; but I am glad to be assured of the fact from a gentleman who does know. I will take care to put it all right the first opportunity I get." The following Sunday the preacher told his congregation that he was sorry he had made a mistake the last time he spoke to them; but that he had met a gentleman—the Mayor of Cambridge—who had assured him that the angels had no pockets, so he must correct what he said, as he did not want anybody to go away with a false notion of Heaven. He would therefore say that if a thief got among the angels without having his nature changed, he would try to steal the feathers out of their wings!

The youth's preaching engagements at this period were by no means confined to Waterbeach. Almost every evening he went to one of the villages round, and from time to time was asked to preach the anniversary sermons at some country chapel. On one such occasion he had been asked by the old minister of Cottenham, Mr. Sutton, who had never seen the youth but had heard he was a good speaker, to come over for the anniversary. Young Spurgeon went, but when Mr. Sutton saw him he exclaimed, "Oh, I shouldn't have asked you here had I known you were such a bit of a boy. Why, the people

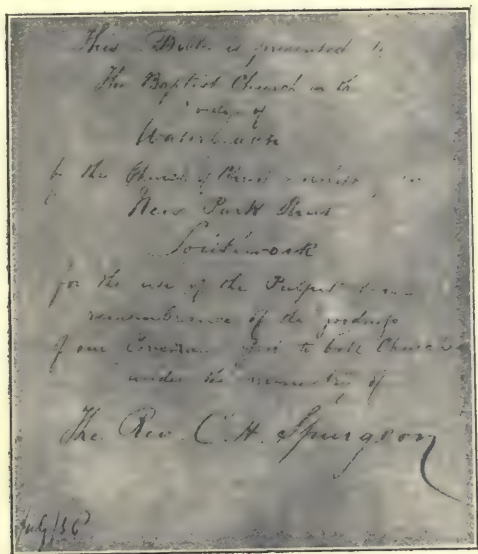


(Starr & Rignall, photo, Cambridge.)

The Waterbeach Communion Plate, presented to the Church by Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

have been pouring into the place all the morning in waggons and dickey carts and all kinds of vehicles—more fools they!” He seemed so perturbed that the young preacher offered to return home, but Mr. Sutton, with all his affected distress, was too wise to allow this. “No, no,” he said, “now you are here you must do the best you can. There is a young fellow over from Cambridge who will help you; and we sha’n’t expect much from you.” Then he paced up and down the vestry, exclaiming, “Oh, dear! oh, dear! what a pass the world is coming to when we get as preachers a parcel of boys who have not got their mother’s milk out of their mouths!” It is probable that the old minister was not quite so dubious of his visitor’s ability as he pretended to be, but no doubt he thought it wise to chasten the youth’s spirit lest pride should uplift him. A surprise awaited the old gentleman. After the prayer and hymns C. H. Spurgeon read from the Book of Proverbs the chapter containing the words, “The hoary head is a crown of glory.” He stopped there and remarked, “I doubt it, for this morning I met with a man who has a hoary head, yet he has not learnt common civility to his fellow-men.” Then the preacher resumed: “if it be found in the way of righteousness.” “Ah!” he said “that’s another thing: a hoary head would then be a crown of glory, and for the matter of that so would a red head or a head of any other colour.” After the sermon, Mr. Sutton, who had been sitting at the foot of the pulpit, slapped the young preacher on the back, and exclaimed, “Bless your heart! I have been a minister nearly forty years, and I was never better pleased with a sermon in all my life; but you are the sauciest dog that ever barked in a pulpit.” The couple became fast friends from that time forth.

Had Charles Haddon Spurgeon not believed strongly in the Divine origin of his call to preach, and had he not possessed a dogged determination to do what he believed to be right, he would very soon have left the pulpit severely alone. Everywhere he was discouraged by those who should have helped him. Here his style was con-



(Starr & Rignall, photo, Cambridge.)

Reduced facsimile of inscription by C. H. Spurgeon
in the Pulpit Bible presented to Waterbeach Chapel
by the New Park Street congregation.

demned, and there he was abused for his youthful appearance. "Let me give you a bit of good advice, my young friend," said a pillar of the church at Houghton; "you'll never make a preacher; so just give it up and stick to

your teaching." To carry out the latter suggestion was becoming necessary, for although he had resigned the position of usher, the small salary at Waterbeach did not prove sufficient to keep him in comfort. Books, theological and otherwise, had to be bought, and even when these were taken in instalments, as for instance Gill's Commentary, published in half-crown parts, the drain upon the young man's resources was great. He therefore determined to take a number of pupils, and with this idea inserted the following advertisement in a Cambridge newspaper: "No. 60, Park Street, Cambridge. Mr. C. H. Spurgeon begs to inform his numerous friends that after Christmas he intends taking six or seven young gentlemen as day pupils. He will endeavour to the utmost to impart a good commercial education. The ordinary routine will include Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry and Mensuration; Grammar and Composition; Ancient and Modern History; Geography, Natural History, Astronomy, Scripture, and Drawing. Latin and the elements of Greek and French if required. Terms, £5 per annum." Before he could form a school, however, developments occurred which rendered such a course unnecessary. How very far from mercenary was the young minister's spirit is clearly testified by the fact that while needing more money for the purchase of books and clothes, he declined the offer of a good position in a high-class school near London, because it would compel him to give up the evangelistic work which he loved so dearly.

While at Waterbeach the question of his entering a college to get the usual ministerial training arose, and at one time C. H. Spurgeon seriously thought of becoming a student of Stepney Baptist College, since removed to Regent's Park. An interview was arranged with Dr.

Angus, tutor of the institution, at the house of Mr. Macmillan, the publisher, in Cambridge, and after a season of prayer the young preacher went there, but owing to the mistake of a servant, who kept the two visitors in separate rooms waiting for each other, Dr. Angus had to leave for London without seeing the youth, while the latter, after waiting a couple of hours, ventured to ring a bell, only to learn that the opportunity he had sought was gone. Still intending to enter college, young Spurgeon thought of making an immediate application in writing, but that afternoon, as he was walking out in the country to fulfil a preaching engagement at one of the villages, he was startled by what seemed a loud voice speaking to him. "The impression was vivid to an intense degree," he says; "I seemed very distinctly to hear the words, 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not!'" This led the youth to look at his position, and although at that time he anticipated obscurity and poverty as the result of the resolve, Charles Haddon Spurgeon did there and then solemnly renounce the offer of collegiate instruction, looking upon the two incidents as Divine interpositions. His father sadly wanted him to enter the college, but Charles explained the whole of the circumstances, expressing his aversion to the proposed course, and as nothing short of a command from his parent would have induced him to leave his Waterbeach congregation for the college, the Rev. John Spurgeon wisely left his son to follow his own judgment, although he still thought a collegiate training to be the proper course. That the son's judgment was right who can now doubt?

Immanuel. 112. 38. 38. 38.

When once I mourned a load of sin
When conscience felt a wound within
When all my works were thrown away
When on my knees I knelt to pray

Then, blissful hour, remember'd well
I learn'd thy love Immanuel.

When storms of woe shall test my soul
When waves of care around me roll
When comforts sink, when joys shall flee
When hopeless gulfs shall gape for me
One word the tempest's rage shall quell
That word thy name, Immanuel.

When for the truth I suffer persecution
When foes pour scandal on my name
When cruel taunts & jeers abound
When Bulls of Bashan gird me round
Secure within my tower I'll dwell
That drink thy grace, Immanuel.

When hell, enraged, lifts up her roar
When Satan stops my path before
When friends rejoice & wait my end
When legions looke their arrows send
Fear not my soul but trust at Hell
Thy battle-car Immanuel.

CHAPTER VIII.

FIRST VISIT TO NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL.

AFTER C. H. Spurgeon had been pastor of Waterbeach Church for about three years an incident happened which, although of comparative insignificance in itself, had far-reaching results, and was really the first step in his progress to London. He had been asked to give an address at the annual meeting of the local Sunday-school Union in the Guildhall at Cambridge, and spoke to a large congregation with his usual straightforwardness and ability. Whether the young preacher's popularity had rendered them jealous, or whether his Calvinistic leanings were opposed to their own cherished doctrines, it is impossible to say, but no sooner had young Spurgeon concluded his address than two elderly ministers who sat with him on the platform rose in succession and made violent attacks upon him. One asked why the young Baptist minister had "left his few sheep in the wilderness," and declared pretty plainly that without any worthy motive he had come up merely to see the battle. But the other speaker went farther; he was personal and even grossly insulting in his remarks. "Was it not a pity," he asked, after contemning the youthfulness of the minister from Waterbeach, "that boys did not adopt the Scriptural practice of tarrying at Jericho till their beards were grown before they tried to instruct their seniors?"

"The boy" was equal to the occasion. Obtaining

the chairman's permission to reply he rose, and speaking with calm dignity reminded the audience that those who were bidden to tarry at Jericho were not boys but full-grown men whose beards had been shaved off by their enemies as the greatest indignity they could be made to suffer, and who were therefore ashamed to return home until their beards



An early portrait of Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

were grown again. The true parallel to their case, he suggested, would be found in a minister who, through falling into open sin, had disgraced his sacred calling and so needed to go into seclusion for a while until his character had been to some extent restored. The effect was instantaneous. Quite unknown to himself, C. H. Spurgeon had exactly

described the minister whose insult had called forth the rebuke, and it is safe to say that not one of those present who knew the circumstances could possibly have entertained any sympathy for the elderly preacher in his crushing defeat.

A Mr. George Gould, deacon of the Baptist church at Loughton, Essex, was present in the Guildhall on this occasion, and the high opinion which he formed of C. H. Spurgeon's abilities, after hearing his address, was confirmed by the able reply to his censurer, which the young minister had delivered without any youthful bravado. Mr. Gould's keen and critical discernment was not at fault. He felt then and there that the youth of nineteen years had a great future before him, and that that future lay in London, a belief which was strengthened the more it was dwelt upon. Not long afterwards this unknown admirer, in talking with a friend of his, Mr. Thomas Olney, one of the deacons of New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, then without a pastor, readily seized the opportunity of recommending the young preacher of Waterbeach. New Park Street Chapel possessed a brilliant history and an inspiring past, but it now seemed to have fallen on evil days. Although capable of seating twelve hundred people, its congregation had dwindled to about a couple of hundred, and but for the devotion of the deacons, well-to-do men who spent much of their wealth in the service of Christ, the Southwark Chapel as a spiritual force would have collapsed altogether. It had numbered among its pastors men of note and power, first and foremost being the famous Benjamin Keach. Dr. John Gill (the commentator), and Dr. Rippon had also ministered to the congregation when it met in Carter Lane, and the chapel in New Park Street had been built only after the Carter Lane sanctuary was demolished to make room for the approaches to London Bridge. The site was not well chosen. It was

so low-lying as to be often flooded by the river, was approached from the City over Southwark Bridge, where a toll was charged, and no hackney carriages could be hired within half-a-mile. Already, when the church was being erected, there were many large factories in the immediate vicinity, and within a few years the district practically ceased to be residential at all. It may be gathered, therefore, that



New Park Street Chapel, at the time Charles Haddon Spurgeon commenced his pastorate there.

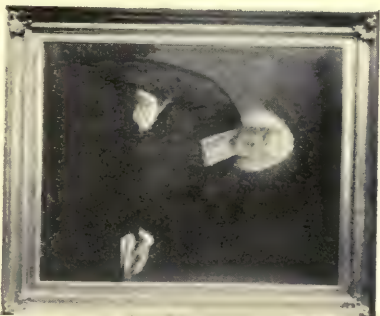
to revive the flagging cause, in the midst of so many disadvantages and adverse circumstances, required a minister of more than ordinary power and ability in the pulpit. An unknown youth, who preached to simple folk in an obscure village chapel, hardly seemed likely to be the minister for the purpose, but after Mr. Olney had been again

urged to the experiment by his Loughton friend he consented to bring the matter before his deacons. The outcome was that, when C. H. Spurgeon arrived at Waterbeach Chapel on the last Sunday morning in November, 1853, he found a letter awaiting him with an invitation to preach at the New Park Street Chapel. So great was the youth's modesty that it never occurred to him that he was the person invited, and handing the letter to one of his deacons, he said, there was evidently some mistake. But the good man knew better, and sorrowfully returning the note declared that what he had always anticipated had come at last—C. H. Spurgeon was too great a preacher to remain pastor of a small village congregation and he would soon be going away. The young minister, however, was alarmed rather than flattered by the honour proposed in the letter, and the next day wrote back accepting the invitation to preach on a certain Sunday, provided that it had not been given under any misapprehension. He then expressed wonder at being known to the deacons, and explained that his last birthday was but his nineteenth.

A second letter from London, confirming the first, led to Charles Haddon Spurgeon's memorable visit to the Metropolis, where his voice was shortly afterwards to sound forth to congregations numbering thousands, and to echo and re-echo in all parts of the world. The young minister's advent to London was not auspicious. Arriving on a dull December evening, alone and friendless, he reached a boarding-house in Queen Square, Bloomsbury, to which he had been directed. Bloomsbury was a smarter district then than it is now, and, as may be imagined, the arrival of the wonderful young minister who was coming to London to preach in one of the most important Nonconformist chapels was anticipated with considerable curiosity by the boarders,



Benjamin Keach,
1668-1704.



(Photos by Mrs. E. Johnson.)
Dr. Gill,
1720-1771.



Dr. Rippon,
1773-1836.

The three famous ministers of the Baptist Church, Southwark, prior to Charles Haddon Spurgeon's pastorate. These are from paintings which hung in the old Tabernacle, and escaped the fire.

particularly by the young men of the house. C. H. Spurgeon arrived in due course and the youths were immensely diverted. Here was a country lad, *gauche* and apparently unsophisticated, dressed in clothes of anything but a stylish cut, with a huge black satin stock round his neck and, horror of horrors, a blue handkerchief with white spots! This was the great pulpit orator who was to revive a drooping cause and follow in the footsteps of such men as Gill and Rippon! It was too amusing, and the "clever" youths enjoyed the joke immensely. But, of course, their polite "breeding" would not allow them to parade their diversion; on the contrary, they sought to encourage the young minister, and, says C. H. Spurgeon, "I was encouraged accordingly! What tales were narrated of the great divines of the Metropolis and their congregations! One, I remember, had a thousand *city* men to hear him; another had his church filled with *thoughtful* people such as could hardly be matched all over England; while a third had an immense audience almost entirely composed of the young men of London, who were spellbound by his eloquence. The study which these men underwent in composing their sermons, their herculean toils in keeping up their congregations, and the matchless oratory which they exhibited on all occasions, were duly rehearsed in my hearing, and when I was shown to bed in a cupboard over the front door, I was not in an advantageous condition for pleasant dreams."

The loneliness of his situation, the recollection of the youths' stories, the miserable environment of the petty room, the remembrance of the suppressed amusement at his appearance, and the noise of the traffic in the streets, which frightened away slumber, all combined to make that sojourn in a London boarding-house the most depressing agency that could have been brought to bear

upon the young minister's spirit. But he was expectant of Divine assistance, and although at first sight of New Park Street Chapel he felt amazed at his own temerity, because the building, imposing and ornate after Water-beach Chapel, seemed to suggest a congregation wealthy and critical, yet with the small audience that gathered he felt that, God helping him, he was not out of his depth. The text was James i. 17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The sermon, which, by the way, was the 673rd that C. H. Spurgeon had preached, was far and away better than any that had been delivered in that chapel for a long time, and greatly surprised the members of the congregation. On returning home they spoke eulogistically to their friends of the young minister from the country, and that evening the audience was much larger than usually met at New Park Street. This time the text was Revelation xiv. 5: "They are without fault before the throne of God," and after the sermon, Mr. Holden Pike tells us, the congregation was too excited to leave the chapel to go home. Nearly all the members of the old church were at last raised from their condition of despondency, and in all parts of the building they were seen in groups conversing about what they had heard and of C. H. Spurgeon's eligibility for the pastorate. The deacons had to come forth from the vestry and promise that they would use their endeavours to secure the young preacher, and it was arranged that a church meeting should be held as soon as possible.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon's own comment on the events of the day is interesting: "The Lord helped me very graciously. I had a happy Sabbath in the pulpit, and spent

the interval with warm-hearted friends ; and when at night I trudged back to the Queen Square narrow lodging, I was not alone, and I no longer looked on Londoners as flinty-hearted barbarians. My tone was altered ; I wanted no pity of anyone ; I did not care a penny for the young



Charles Haddon Spurgeon when he first came to London.

gentlemen lodgers and their miraculous ministers, nor for the grind of the cabs nor for anything else under the sun. The lion had been looked at all round, and his majesty did not appear to be a tenth as majestic as when I had only heard his roar miles away."

DECLARATION

O F T H E

*Faith and Practice of the Church of CHRIST, in Carter-lane, South-
work, under the Pastoral Care of Dr. John Gill;*

Read and assented to, at the Admission of MEMBERS.

HAVING been enabled, through divine Grace, to give my confessions to thy Lord and himself, to our Father by the will of God, we present a duty incumbent upon us, to make a declaration of our faith and practice, to the honour of Christ, and the glory of thy Name; knowing, that it will be ours, as before, our righteousness, to receive to such our salvation (1); which declaration

I We believe, That the Scriptures of the old and new Testaments, are (1.) the word of God, and the only rule (2.) of faith and practice.

JL: We believe that "There shall in one (2) only be God, and one God: that shall are: These persons are the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who are equal in nature, power, and glory, who all together with the Father, are one God, eternally and properly God in the Father. Their divine nature persons are distinguished from each other, by particular relative properties. The distinguishing character and relative property of the first person is that he is *the Father*, who is *the Father* by nature, and is *the Father* in his own proper Son (2), and is the source of all things; and therefore is with *proper propriety* called the *Father*. The distinguishing character and relative property of the second person is that he is *the Son*, who is *the Son* by nature, and is *the Son* in his own proper Son (2), and is the Son by reason so united and seen as not to be adopted to him as one, but by office as one's righteousness, and, by nature, by the Father's eternal generation (10), of all things in the Father. The distinguishing character and relative property of the third person is to be *anointed* by the Father and the Son, and to proceed from both (11) and is *very properly* called the *spirit* or *breath* of both. Their relative properties are, that the Father is *anointed*, *firmly* *anointed*, in the one true God (28).

III. We believe that before the world began, God did create (1) a certain number of men into eternal salvation; which he began previously to the advent of children by Jesus Christ of his own free grace, and according to the great pleasure of his will; and that in pursuance of this gracious design, he did convert and make a covenant (2) of grace and peace with his Son Jesus Christ, on the behalf of those persons, wherein a Supper (3) was appointed, and all spiritual (4) blessings provided for them: so that their (5) persons, with all their grace (6) and glory, were put into the hands of Christ, and made his care and charge.

[IV] We believe that God created the first man *Adam*, after his image, *evl* in his likeness, an upright, holy, and innocent creature, capable of loving and glorifying him (19), but he himself was the author of his ruin, and came into the glory of God (20); and that he was the first progenitor of the human race, and that he was the first to fall by disobeying God, thus he is ordinary and natural generation (21); thus they are by their first birth corrupt and sinful; *evl* to all that is good, susceptible of doing evil, and prone to vice (22); and are all by nature children of wrath, and under the curse of God (23, 24); and for his sake, not only the corruption of death, but, and universal corruption, which is called *original sin*, is also very lighter to an eternal death (25); as confessed in the first *Adam*, fallen and sinners, from all which there is an deliverance, but by Christ (26) the second *Adam*.

[illegible]

VI. We believe, That that precious Redemption which Christ has obtained by the shedding of his blood (25) is general and particular: that is to say, that it was only intentionally obtained for the Church of God, and Shew of Christ, who only have the special and particular blessings of it.

VII. We believe, That the justification of God's Elect, is only by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, without the consideration of any works of righteousness done by them; and that the full and free pardon of all their sin and transgressions, past, present, and to come, is only through the blood of Christ (37); according to the riches of his grace

VIII. We believe, That the work of regeneration, conversion, sanctification, and faith, is not an act of (38) man's free-will and power, but of the mighty, efficacious and available (39) grace of God.

IX. We believe That all those who are chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sanctified by the Spirit, shall certainly and finally persevere, so that not one of them shall ever perish, but shall have everlasting life.

X. We believe, That there will be a resurrection of the dead, (41) both of the just and unjust, and that Christ will once a second time (42) to judge both quick and dead, when he will set the righteous on the wicked, and introduce his own people into his kingdom and glory, where they shall be for ever with him.

XI. We believe, That Baptism (43) and the Lord's Supper are sacraments of Christ, so be continued until his second coming; and that the former is absolutely requisite to the latter; that it is to be that those (44) only are to be admitted into the communion of the church, and to partake of all ordinances in it (45) who upon profession of their faith, have been baptized (46) by immersion, in the name (47) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

XII. We also believe, That singing of Psalms, Hymns, and spiritual Songs vocally (48), is an ordinance of the Gospel to be performed by believers; but that as to time, place, and manner, every one ought to be left to their liberty (49), in using it.

Now all, and each of these difficulties and obstacles, we look upon ourselves under the greatest obligation to reduce, diminish, and defend; believing it to be our duty (so) to stand fast in our own, with our mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.

And whereas we are very sinful, that our consciences, both
in the world and in the church, ought to be as beacons of the
judges of Christ, we judge a our incumbent duty, to (31) wit-
ness without respect them that are without, to cut-off a conscience
(32) void of offence towards God and men, by living (34) soberly,
righteously, and in godly love, amidst world.

And as in our regards to each other, in our church-communication, we express it our duty to (55) walk with each other in all humility and brotherly love, so we (56) owe each other's conversation to fix up one (57) another to love and good works, not turning up the scoffing of our lives together, in our love opportunities, in our love God according to his revealed will, and when the life requires, to warn (58) rebuke, and admonish one another, according to the rules of the Gospel.

Moreover, we thank ourselves obliged (99) to sympathize with each other, in all contrivance, both inward and outward, which God, in his providence, may bring on into, as also to (be) bear with one another's weaknesses, failings, and infirmities; and particularly to pray for our neighbor, as; and that the Gospel, and the ordinances thereof, might be blessed to the edification and comfort of each others souls, and for the gathering in of others to Christ, besides those who are already gathered.

All which duties we strive to be found in the performance of, through the gracious assistance of the Holy Spirit, whilst we both honour and obey the great, which has given us a place, and a name in God's house, better than that of time and dangerous (Re) No. 41.

(Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)

The Declaration of Faith of the Church which met first at Carter Lane, then at New Park Street, and finally in the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Mr. Joseph Passmore was the friend who walked back with C. H. Spurgeon to his boarding-house in Bloomsbury, and the companionship thus commenced was of lifelong endurance. Mr. Passmore was the first real friend that the famous preacher had in London, and the relations



Charles Haddon Spurgeon and his friend and publisher
Mr. Joseph Passmore.

between the two, both personal and business, were always of the happiest character, so that for the forty years which they lasted, never a single jar or an approach to coolness came in to mar the mutual love and esteem.

CHAPTER IX.

SETTLEMENT IN LONDON.

THE young preacher was not puffed up by the success of his first attempt to minister to a London congregation. The deacons of New Park Street Chapel had told him that, if he preached there three Sundays, not one of the twelve hundred seats would be vacant, and directly after his first sermon he was invited by the principal deacon to supply for six months, a request which the youth declined as he thought it too hasty, but he promised to preach on alternate Sundays during the following month. No other minister who had visited New Park Street since the vacancy in the pastorate had been invited to preach a second time, and the honour implied in the request of the deacons to C. H. Spurgeon might well have given him cause for self-satisfaction and pride. But how far from such thoughts his mind really was is proved by his letters to his father, who, by the way, thought he was wrong in going to London. In his first letter after the visit of November, 1853, young Spurgeon recounted what the deacons had said, but, so far from taking any credit to himself, he wrote, "I told them they did not know what they were doing, nor whether they were in the body or out of the body; they were so starved that a morsel of Gospel was a treat to them. . . . It is God's doing. I do not deserve it;—they are mistaken. I only mention facts. I have not exaggerated, nor am I very

exalted by it, for to leave my own dear people makes it a painful pleasure." A few days later he wrote, "Should I be settled in London, I will come and see you often. I do not anticipate going there with much pleasure. I am contented where I am; but if God has more for me to do, then let me go and trust in Him." This same letter has an interesting passage showing the doctrinal position of C. H. Spurgeon at this time, as indeed throughout his long ministry. "The London people," he says, "are rather higher in Calvinism than I am; but I have succeeded in bringing one church to my own views and will trust with Divine assistance to do the same with another. I am a Calvinist: I love what someone called 'glorious Calvinism,' but 'Hyperism' is too hot-spiced for my palate."

The invitation of the deacons to the young minister to supply for six months was confirmed at a church meeting, and several of the officials wrote begging him to accept. But while expressing intense gratification at the unanimity of the church in relation to its invitation, C. H. Spurgeon felt that it would be unbecoming in one so young to promise to minister to a London congregation for such a long period without further experience. He therefore suggested a test of three months, and wrote: "With regard to a six months' invitation from you, I have no objection to the length of time, but rather approve of the prudence of the church in wishing to have one so young as myself on an extended period of probation, but I write after well weighing the matter to say positively that I cannot, I *dare* not accept an unqualified invitation for so long a time. My objection is not to the length of the time of probation, but it ill becomes a youth to promise to preach to a London congregation so long until he

knows *them* and they know *him*. I would engage to supply for three months of that time, and then, should the congregation fail, or the church disagree, I would reserve to myself liberty without breach of engagement to retire; and you could on your part have the right to dismiss me without seeming to treat me ill. Should I see no reason for so doing, and the church still retain their wish for me, I can remain the other three months either with or



Charles Haddon Spurgeon preaching in New Park Street pulpit.

without the formality of a further invitation, but even during that time (the second three months) I should not like to regard myself as a fixture in case of ill-success, but would only be a supply, liable to a fortnight's dismissal or resignation. Perhaps this is not business-like—I do not know; but this is the course I should prefer, if it would be agreeable to the church. Enthusiasm and popularity

are often the crackling of thorns and soon expire. I do not wish to be a hindrance if I cannot be a help."

In a letter to a friend written at this time, the young preacher mentions that he has a presentiment that before long he will be more intimately connected with New Park Street Chapel. There was some delay in commencing work at Southwark owing to the difficulty of securing supplies for Waterbeach, but eventually all the hindrances were overcome, and C. H. Spurgeon came to London on his first extended visit. No sooner had he commenced his ministry than the prophecy of the deacons was fulfilled. All the seats *were* occupied, the aisles were blocked, and in every niche and corner people were packed till the building could hold no more; the prayer meetings were full of power and many conversions took place. In such circumstances the completion of the period of probation was quite unnecessary. On April 19, 1854, a special church meeting unanimously invited Charles Haddon Spurgeon to the pastorate of New Park Street Chapel, and a week later he accepted. "I sought not to come to you," he wrote, "for I was the minister of an obscure but affectionate people; I never solicited advancement. The first note of invitation from your deacons came quite unlooked-for, and I trembled at the idea of preaching in London. I could not understand how it had come about, and even now I am filled with astonishment at the wondrous Providence. I would wish to give myself into the hands of our covenant God, whose wisdom directs all things. He shall choose for me, and, so far as I can judge, this is His choice. I feel it to be a high honour to be the pastor of a people who can mention glorious names as my predecessors, and I entreat of you to remember me in prayer that I may

realize the solemn responsibility of my trust. Remember my youth and inexperience, and pray that these may not hinder my usefulness. I trust also that the remembrance of these will lead you to forgive mistakes I may make, or unguarded words I may utter."



(Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)

Charles Haddon Spurgeon and his first deacons.

His lack of college training had been referred to by C. H. Spurgeon, but the only comment of the deacons was, "That is to us a special recommendation, for you would not have much savour or unction if you came

from college," and his wishes in regard to the abandonment of a formal ordination or recognition ceremony were also readily acceded to. In a letter to Mr. James Low he set forth his objections, the strongest being mentioned first: "Because I am a minister and will never receive authority and commission from men; nor do I like that which has the shadow of such a thing about it. I detest the dogma of apostolic succession, and dislike the revival of the doctrine by delegating power from minister to minister." If God would make him useful, he declared, he was not afraid of being recognized by all good men.

And so Charles Haddon Spurgeon became pastor of New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, and began that long and wonderful ministry in London which has had no parallel, in modern times at any rate.

The following contemporary description of the young preacher's style at this time, written by a Mr. Hare, is interesting. "His voice is clear and musical; his language plain; his style flowing, but terse; his method lucid and orderly; his matter sound and suitable; his tone and spirit cordial; his remarks always pithy and pungent, sometimes familiar and colloquial, yet never light or coarse, much less profane. Judging from a single sermon, we supposed that he would become a plain, faithful, forcible and affectionate preacher of the Gospel in the form called Calvinistic; and our judgment was the more favourable, because while there was a solidity beyond his years we detected little of the wild luxuriance naturally characteristic of very young preachers."

More eulogistic was the opinion of Sheridan Knowles, the actor and playwright, who after his conversion was baptized and became a tutor at Stepney College. "Go and hear the Cambridgeshire lad at once," he said to the

students. This was in May, 1854, just after C. H. Spurgeon had become permanent pastor at New Park Street. "He is only a boy, but he is the most wonderful preacher in the world. He is absolutely perfect in his oratory; and beside that, a master in the art of acting. He has nothing to learn from me or anyone else. He is simply perfect. He knows everything. He can do anything. I was once lessee of Drury Lane Theatre; and were I still in that position I would offer him a fortune to play for one season on the boards of that house. Why, boys, he can do anything he pleases with his audience! He can make them laugh and cry and laugh again in five minutes. His power was never equalled. Now mark my words, boys, that young man will live to be the greatest preacher of this or any other age. He will bring more souls to Christ than any man who ever proclaimed the Gospel, not excepting the Apostle Paul. His name will be known everywhere, and his sermons will be translated into many of the languages of the world." Sheridan Knowles lived long enough to see his remarkable prophecy in the way of fulfilment.

Few young men of twenty years could have had the success which attended C. H. Spurgeon's ministry at New Park Street, without being spoiled therewith. In his case, however, the success only engendered greater humility. He attributed it entirely to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and declared his appreciation of the fact that he ministered to a praying congregation. "My success appalled me," he says, "and the thought of the career which it seemed to open up, so far from elating me cast me into the lowest depth, out of which I uttered my *miserere* and found no room for a *gloria in excelsis*. Who was I that I should continue to lead so great a

multitude? I would betake me to my village obscurity or emigrate to America and find a solitary nest in the backwoods, where I might be sufficient for the things which would be demanded of me. It was just then that the curtain was rising upon my life-work and I dreaded what it might reveal. I hope I was not faithless; but I was timorous and filled with a sense of my own unfitness."

These were C. H. Spurgeon's personal and secret experiences of soul and mind. In the work of the ministry he showed all the ability and tact of a man of ripe age. Those who had been doubtful were soon among his best friends, and an unanimity and fellowship reigned which had been unknown at the church for years. One ex-member of the congregation tried to revive an old dispute and draw the young minister into the question, but Charles Haddon Spurgeon would have none of it. Bygones must be bygones, he said, and the peace of the church remained unbroken. Conversions under his preaching were matters of weekly occurrence, many of the cases being of a remarkable character. One man, who had been accustomed to go to a gin-palace to procure drink for his Sunday evening's carousal, saw a crowd round the door of the chapel and went in out of curiosity. He forced his way to the top of the gallery stairs, and at that moment the preacher turned towards the place where he was standing, and knowing nothing of the circumstances, remarked that there might be a man in the gallery who had come in with no very good motive, for even then he had a gin bottle in his pocket. The singularity of the expression struck the man, and being startled because the preacher so exactly described him he listened attentively to the warnings which followed and was converted, becoming afterwards a consistent Christian.

That first year in London was a difficult one for the

young preacher. As has been shown already, his very success caused him anxiety, and before he had been in Southwark twelve months the Asiatic cholera broke out, entailing twenty times the usual amount of work, besides adding vastly to the responsibility and solemnity of his office. Although having preaching engagements out of London, he felt it was his duty to be on the spot in such a time of disease and death and sorrow, and he gave himself up with ardour to the ministration of the sick. The young minister was sent for from all corners of the district by persons of various ranks and religions, and almost every day he was called upon to do duty by the open grave. Many an older and more experienced minister might well have broken down in the circumstances, but C. H. Spurgeon was sustained in both health and spirit, and if any lingering doubts had still been entertained by the deacons, of his fitness for the pastorate, they must have been dispelled in that time of calamity.

CHAPTER X.

INCREASING POPULARITY AND SUCCESS.

BEFORE many months had passed it became evident to the deacons of New Park Street Chapel that something would have to be done to secure greater accommodation for the crowds who wanted to hear C. H. Spurgeon preach. Sunday after Sunday every available place and corner where a human being could sit, stand or crouch was occupied, and hundreds were unable even to get near the doors. The officials of the chapel were at their wits' end, but one day the young minister, turning to the wall behind him, exclaimed, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down and by faith this wall at the back shall come down too!" The shock caused by so daring a proposal was considerable, and an elderly deacon immediately reproved the young pastor, saying, "Let us never hear of that again." Charles Haddon Spurgeon, however, was not to be suppressed. He said the best way to dismiss the subject was to get the work done, and sure enough at a special church meeting it was decided to open a fund for the purpose of removing the wall and throwing the vestries and schools into the chapel. This work, which cost two thousand pounds, occupied from February 11th to May 27th, 1855, and in the meantime the church met in Exeter Hall. The news that a large chapel whose congregation had dwindled to less than a couple of hundred persons, had in a year become too small for the crowds

of people who went to hear a country lad preach, caused general amazement and led to still greater numbers attending his ministry. Even after the enlarged chapel had been opened it was soon found far too small for the evening congregations. To use C. H. Spurgeon's own apt illustration, to accommodate the vast crowds who tried to



Charles Haddon Spurgeon in the pulpit at New
Park Street Chapel.

enter the chapel was like attempting "to put the sea into a teapot," and in June, 1856, Exeter Hall was again taken for the Sunday evening services. During both sojourns the great auditorium was invariably filled to excess. For an hour before the opening of the

doors the Strand used to be blocked with people, and traffic had to be diverted into side streets. Nine-tenths of the congregations were men, and the explanation of this strange fact, which was suggested at the time, was that women were unable to endure the awful pressure and the rending of clothes. Parties would sometimes go to the Hall from places ten or twelve miles distant, and, although arriving half-an-hour before the time of the service, would never get so much as near the door. "Dear me, how little satisfies the crowd!" wrote C. H. Spurgeon in a letter to a friend. "What on earth are other preachers up to, when, with ten times the talent they are snoring along with prosy sermons and sending the world away? The reason is, I believe, they do not know what the Gospel is; they are afraid of real Gospel Calvinism and therefore the Lord does not own them." It has been said that if preaching takes nothing out of a man, it puts nothing into anyone else. At this time the strain on the young minister was tremendous. His voice would oftentimes almost break as he earnestly pleaded with the people, and more than once his strength was well-nigh exhausted. A glass of Chili vinegar always stood on a shelf under the desk before him at Exeter Hall, and very frequently the preacher found it necessary to have recourse to this stimulant. Once, when preaching from the text, "His Name shall endure for ever," he so poured out his soul that at last utterance failed, and Mrs. Spurgeon, who was present, tells us that she thought he would have died there in the face of all the people. But recovering his voice, he uttered, in broken accents, the words, "Let my name perish, but let Christ's Name last for ever! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Crown Him Lord of all! You will not hear me say anything else. These are my last words in Exeter Hall for this

time. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Crown him Lord of all!" and then he fell back almost fainting in the chair behind him.

Persons of note were very early seen in C. H. Spurgeon's congregations. At the beginning of 1856 the Lord Mayor of London, a Jew, paid a visit to New Park Street Chapel and afterwards went into the vestry to thank the preacher and to invite him to the Mansion House, while about the same time the Chief Commissioner of Police listened to a sermon and greeted C. H. Spurgeon in the vestry at the close of the service. But he was not elated by the attention of the great. After mentioning these facts in a letter to a friend, the young preacher wrote, "Better still some thieves, thimble-riggers, harlots, etc., have come and some are now in the church, as also a right honourable hot-potato man, who is prominently known as 'a hot Spurgeonite.'"

There were not wanting those who described the new preacher as a "nine days' wonder," and prophesied that his career would be as brief as that of a comet, leaving behind nothing tangible as a witness of its course. But the work done by C. H. Spurgeon was from the first solid and lasting. He did not merely draw large crowds to hear him preach; he built up his church and consolidated the congregation, which at the end of 1856 had increased to 860—a result probably without precedent, considering the briefness of the period. The financial state of the church was equally prosperous, there being no debt despite the enormous sums which had been expended in enlarging the chapel and hiring Exeter Hall. The Baptist Denomination owed a vast deal to the young pastor's ministry. The annual gatherings of the London Association of Baptist Churches had for a long time been very poorly attended, but when in January, 1855, the meetings were

held at New Park Street, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached, the chapel was crowded. It was on this occasion that Dr. Thomas Binney, who was present, said of the young minister's sermon, "It is an insult to God and man; I never heard such things in my life before." But he lived to change his mind, and years afterwards the same distinguished divine said, "If I ever said anything against him I might just as well have pulled down a skep of bees about my head; but now I have no feeling towards him but that of the utmost regard and affection."

Wherever he went the young preacher drew immense congregations such as had not been seen since the days of Wesley and Whitefield. No buildings could accommodate the people who flocked to hear him. On a Tuesday in April, 1855, he preached at Shoreditch, and the chapel, which was built to hold six hundred people, contained nine hundred. Huge crowds gathered outside, and it was only when C. H. Spurgeon himself went and personally appealed to them, that some dispersed. But a large number continued to stand round the building, and all the windows had to be thrown open so that the people outside, as well as those inside, could listen to the sermon. Even more remarkable were the scenes when he preached in the open air. In a great field at Hackney, on June 22nd, 1855, ten thousand persons gathered and listened intently to a sermon upon the text, "Christ is all" (Col. iii. 11). The scene at the close is graphically described in a letter which the preacher wrote to his *fiancée* on the following day. "The Lord was with me, and the profoundest silence was observed; but, oh, the close—never did mortal man receive a more enthusiastic ovation! I wonder I am alive! After the service, five or six gentlemen endeavoured to clear a passage, but I was borne



A rare photograph of Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

along, amid cheers and prayers and shouts, for about a quarter of an hour—it really seemed more like a week! I was hurried round and round the field without hope of escape until, suddenly seeing a nice open carriage with two occupants standing near, I sprang in and begged them to drive away. This they most kindly did, and I stood up waving my hat and crying, ‘The blessing of God be with you!’ while from thousands of heads the hats were lifted and cheer after cheer was given. Surely amid these plaudits I can hear the low rumblings of an advancing storm of reproaches; but even this I can bear for the Master’s sake.”

In the provinces and in Scotland the same thing happened. But in the midst of all his popularity never was man more humble and never did minister work more disinterestedly. Although at this time he could have enjoyed considerable wealth, the preacher’s style of living was almost penurious, so that he might help others. When he went to New Park Street an arrangement was made between him and the deacons that whatever the seat-rents produced should be his. As a matter of fact at that time the rents produced very little, and the sum thus realized in former pastorates, had had to be supplemented by a great number of collections. With C. H. Spurgeon’s advent the vacant seats were soon occupied, but so far from keeping the money which legitimately belonged to him, he announced to the deacons, at the close of the first three months, that there must be no more collections for incidental expenses; he would himself pay for the cleaning and lighting of the chapel, and this he did not only at New Park Street but at the Metropolitan Tabernacle to the time of his death. His disregard of wealth for himself and his unstinting generosity to others had

their effect upon the congregation in making them like-minded, so that the total church income, which in 1853 had been less than £300 was in 1855 over £2,374. The pastor's earnestness, too, was manifested not only in the pulpit, but everywhere he went, and so heavily was the burden of souls laid upon his heart that he was impelled to speak upon spiritual matters to the men and women with whom he came in personal contact. "Sometimes," he tells us, "I have found it less easy than it might otherwise have been to influence certain persons for good because of the neglect of those who ought to have done the work before me." As an instance we are given the following experience: "I was trying to say a word for my Master to a coachman, one day, when he said to me, 'Do you know the Rev. Mr. So-and-so?' 'Yes,' I replied; 'I know him very well; what have you to say about him?' 'Well,' said the man, 'he's the sort of minister I like, and I like his religion very much.' 'What sort of a religion is it?' I asked. 'Why,' he answered, 'he has ridden on this box-seat every day for six months and he has never said anything about religion all the while; that's the kind of minister I like.' It seemed to me," adds C. H. Spurgeon, "a very doubtful compliment for a man who professed to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ." The young preacher always adapted himself to the needs of any with whom he might speak, and never was he at a loss to know how to deal with persons. Once he met a man who assented to all he said. When he talked about the evil of sin the man agreed and said the minister was very faithful. When he spoke of the way of salvation the man acquiesced, although it was evident his heart was not affected. So at last, feeling that it was quite hopeless to continue the conversation, C. H. Spurgeon said, "The fact is, one of these days you will die and be

damned," and then walked away. The arrow went home, and after a period of soul-agony the man was brought to repentance and faith. He was baptized and joined the church, of which he remained an honoured and useful member to the time of his death.

Such stories, showing the young preacher's earnestness, his originality and his blunt honesty, might be multiplied till they filled a large volume, but sufficient has been said to show his character at this period. It was not by flattery and compromise that he won the people: of such methods, in the ministry or out of it, he knew nothing. He dispensed the truth undiluted, he put his finger on the most secret sins of his hearers and told them, without mitigation or toning down, the consequence of ignoring God and living without personal religion. It was this boldness and plain presentation of the truth that appealed to a people sick at heart of mere "culture" in the pulpit and of a Christianity characterized only by eminent respectability.

CHAPTER XI.

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE.

S OON after settling in London, C. H. Spurgeon took that important step which has such an influence upon the lives of all men—particularly public men; he chose for himself a partner to share his joys and sorrows and it must be confessed that never was man happier in his choice. Among those present in the evening congregation when the minister from Waterbeach first visited New Park Street Chapel, was a young girl named Susannah Thompson, a friend of Mr. and Mrs. Olney. Her ideas of the dignity and propriety of the ministry, she tells us, had been rather shocked by the reports which the morning worshippers had brought back, so that she was not prepossessed in the preacher's favour; nor was she at all fascinated by the young orator's eloquence when she heard him, while his countrified manner and speech excited more regret than reverence. Later on, when C. H. Spurgeon was called to the pastorate of New Park Street Chapel, Miss Thompson met him from time to time at the house of Mr. Olney, and often went to hear him preach. She had already been brought to see her need of a Saviour, and had solemnly resolved to surrender herself to the will of Christ, but at this time she had become cold and indifferent to the things of God, and seasons of darkness, despondency and doubt passed over her. Under the ministry of the young preacher it was not

long before she became alarmed at her backsliding state, and she sought comfort from Mr. William Olney, old Mr. Olney's son, who was an active worker in the Sunday-school. Whether he spoke of the young girl to the pastor is not certain, but not long afterwards Miss Thompson received an illustrated copy of "Pilgrim's Progress," with the inscription in C. H. Spurgeon's handwriting, "Miss Thompson, with desires for her progress in the blessed pilgrimage, from C. H. Spurgeon, April 20, 1854."

"I do not think," says Mrs. Spurgeon, "my beloved had at that time any other thought concerning me than to help a struggling soul heavenward; but I was greatly impressed by his concern for me and the book became very precious as well as helpful. By degrees, though with much trembling, I told him of my state before God; and he gently led me by his teaching and by his conversation through the power of the Holy Spirit to the Cross of Christ for the peace and pardon my weary soul was longing for."

The friendship steadily grew, but so far as the young girl was concerned there was no thought of love until one day, in very characteristic and original fashion, the pastor made known the state of his heart. It was the day of the opening of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, June 10, 1854, and a large party of friends associated with New Park Street Chapel was present, including Miss Thompson and Charles Haddon Spurgeon. While waiting for the ceremony to begin, the pastor, who had been reading Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*, handed the volume to the young girl sitting by his side, and asked her what she thought of the lines under the heading "Of Marriage."

Then in a very low whisper, heard by none save the ear for which it was intended, he asked. "Do you pray

for him who is to be your husband?" In a moment the significance of the remark flashed upon the maiden's mind, her heart beat fast, her cheeks flushed, and from that time the brilliant pageant before her eyes seemed to have few attractions. Two months later C. H. Spurgeon formally proposed and was accepted. "To me," says Mrs. Spurgeon, "it was a time as solemn as it was sweet; and with a great awe in my heart I left my beloved, and hastening to the house and to an upper room (the troth had been plighted in the old-fashioned garden of her



Mrs. Spurgeon at the time
of her marriage.

grandfather's home) I knelt before God and praised and thanked Him with happy tears for His great mercy in giving me the love of so good a man."

Of necessity the young people did not see very much of one another, for at this time C. H. Spurgeon was preaching twelve or thirteen sermons a week, and travelling hundreds of miles by road and rail to fulfil engagements, so that he had little enough spare time. But their love grew stronger as the weeks went by, and the fact that in the

highest matters their thoughts were one, united their hearts in a way that no mere earthly ties could have done.

When, a short time afterwards, it became his duty as minister to baptize his *fiancée*, Charles Haddon Spurgeon asked her to put upon paper her confession of faith. She did so, and in acknowledging this he wrote:—

“The letter is all I can desire. Oh! I could weep for joy (as I certainly am doing now) to think that my beloved can so well testify to a work of grace in her soul. I knew you were *really* a child of God, but I did not think you had been led in such a path. . . . I flatter no one, but allow me to say honestly that few cases which have come under my notice are so satisfactory as yours. Mark, I write not now as your *admiring friend*, but impartially as your pastor. If the Lord had intended your destruction He would not have told you such things as these, nor would He enable you so unreservedly to cast yourself upon His faithful promise. As I hope to stand at the bar of God clear of the blood of all men, it would ill become me to flatter; and as I love you with the deepest and purest affection, far be it from me to trifle with your immortal interests; but I will say again that my gratitude to God ought to be great, as well on my own behalf as yours, that you have been so deeply schooled in the lessons of the heart, and have so frequently looked into the charnel-house of your own corruption. There are other lessons to come: that you may be thoroughly furnished; but, oh! my dear one, how good to learn the first lesson well! I loved you once, but feared you might not be an heir of Heaven;—God in His mercy showed me that you were indeed *elect*. I then thought I might without sin reveal my affection to you,—but up to the time

I saw your note, I could not imagine that you had seen such great sights, and were so thoroughly versed in soul-knowledge. God is good, very good, infinitely good. Oh, how I prize this last gift, because I now know, more than ever, that the Giver loves the gift, and so I may love it, too, but only in subservience to Him. Dear purchase of a Saviour's blood, you are to me a Saviour's gift, and my heart is full to overflowing with the thought of such continued goodness. I do not wonder at His goodness, for it is just like Him; but I cannot but lift up the voice of joy at His manifold mercies."

A remarkable love-letter surely, and yet one that reveals clearly the writer's mind and the bond of sympathy, as well as of love, that existed between himself and the recipient. This bond became stronger as time went on, and late in life, referring to his wife, Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote, "She has been to me God's best earthly gift, and not a little even of heavenly treasure has come to me by her means. She has often been as an angel of God unto me."

Few women would have been capable of proving a true helpmeet for a man with a mission such as C. H. Spurgeon's. There was no room for selfishness, and the striking tribute which the great preacher was able to give to his partner in life is one which should be everywhere "told for a memorial of her." On Mondays, the time when he was able usually to snatch a few hours from his duties to see his *fiancée*, the young minister would take his previous day's sermon with him to revise for the Press, and the young girl had to "sit quiet" and "mind her own business" while this important work went on. She was an apt pupil, but there were some lessons to be mastered to fit her for the position of a great minister's wife, which were not altogether agreeable. More than once at the

chapel he was so occupied with the thoughts of the coming service that he failed to recognize his *fiancée* in the vestry, and greeted her with merely a handshake and a grave, "How are you?" as though she were a stranger. On a certain occasion, however, a more painful lesson had to be learnt. The couple had gone together one afternoon to a hall in Kennington where C. H. Spurgeon was to preach. A great crowd had gathered, and as the young minister and his *fiancée* ascended the thronged staircase, the burden of the message he was to deliver filled his mind so that he quite forgot his companion and went through a side door into a kind of reception room, leaving Miss Thompson to struggle with the crowd. She was naturally indignant at what she then considered unpardonable thoughtlessness, and in no comfortable frame of mind returned home at once. But Miss Thompson had that choicest of possessions, a sensible and loving mother, who, after soothing her ruffled spirit, pointed out that Charles Haddon Spurgeon was no ordinary man, that his whole life was absolutely dedicated to God and His service, and declared that the young girl must never, never hinder him by trying to put herself first in his heart. The lesson was well learned, and when the preacher later on hurried in, excitedly inquiring for his *fiancée*, it was not to meet with protests and expostulations, but to receive a submissive and repentant little maiden. He listened to her story and assured her of his deep affection, but explained that before all things he was God's servant and she must be prepared to yield her claims to those of the Divine Master.

It was not merely passive help, however, that the young girl rendered to C. H. Spurgeon. She was his active associate through life, and even before they were married began to assist him in his literary labours. A little book,

entitled, "Smooth Stones taken from Ancient Brooks," was the joint work of the devoted couple, Miss Thompson, at the request of the young minister, having gone through an old Puritan folio and marked passages of peculiar sweetness or instructiveness, which were extracted and arranged by C. H. Spurgeon for republication in handy form.

The wedding took place at New Park Street Chapel on January 8th, 1856, Dr. Alexander Fletcher conducting the

*In a few days it will be out
of my power to present anything
to Miss Thompson. Let this be
a remembrance of our happy
meetings & sweet conversations
Dec. 22/55.*

C. H. Spurgeon

Inscription on the fly-leaf of a first volume of printed sermons
presented by Charles Haddon Spurgeon to the lady
who shortly afterwards became his wife.

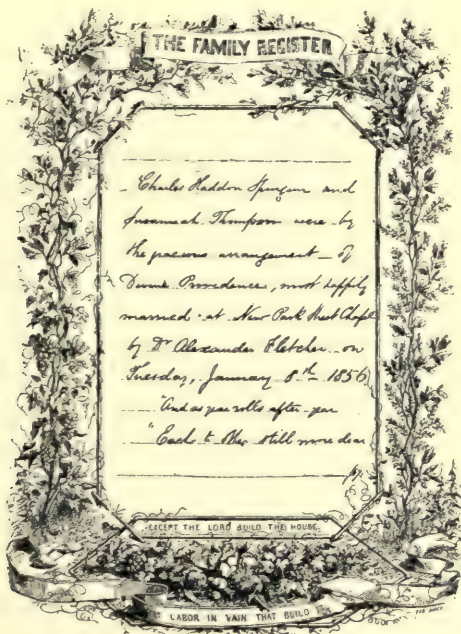
simple service. Naturally the chapel was filled to its utmost capacity. From an early hour the streets had been thronged with people, and, indeed, so congested were the adjoining thoroughfares that a body of police had to be summoned to control the traffic and prevent accidents. Over two thousand persons were unable to gain admission although they waited outside to cheer the young couple

and wish them God speed as they drove away. The brief honeymoon of ten days was spent in Paris, and then Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon returned to London and took up their abode in their first home in the New Kent Road, London. Those were difficult times for the young couple financially. Rigid economy had to be practised in all things, and they even had to "pinch" to "make both ends meet," for from their slender resources they contributed largely to the support and education of a young man for the ministry—the beginning of that wonderful work carried on afterwards at the Pastors' College. "We never had enough left over to 'tie a bow and ends,'" says Mrs. Spurgeon, "but I can see now that this was God's way of preparing us to sympathize with, and help poor pastors in the years which were to come."

At times the resources would be apparently at an end, and then were vouchsafed to the young couple remarkable instances of God's providential care for those who reposed their trust in Him. On one occasion a demand was made for the payment of a rate or tax, but the coffers were empty, and the only thing the minister and his wife could do was "to lay their burden before the Lord." The answer came with almost startling swiftness, for that very night or early the next morning an anonymous letter was received containing twenty pounds "for the use of Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon." They never learnt who sent the money, and only knew that it was in answer to prayer. "As the years rolled by," says the great preacher's wife, "such eventful passages in our history were graciously multiplied and even excelled; but perhaps this first blessed deliverance was the foundation-stone of my husband's strong and mighty faith, for I do not remember ever afterwards seeing him painfully anxious concerning supplies for any of his great works;

he depended wholly on the Lord, his trust was perfect and he lacked nothing."

What times of domestic felicity the young minister now enjoyed! At the close of a hard Sabbath day's work he would go home and rest in his easy chair, while his



Reduced facsimile of an inscription by Charles
Haddon Spurgeon in his family Bible.

wife sat at his feet and read to him from some favourite book. One evening it would be something to soothe or refresh him after a period of excitement or exhaustion, and another evening the preacher would ask for Baxter's "Reformed Pastor," or a work of an equally stimulating

character to quicken what he described as his "sluggish heart," though never was minister more faithful to his God and to his flock. It was oftentimes hard for the wife to part with her beloved husband when he went on distant missions, but never did she hinder him, and the surrender was always made as a willing sacrifice to God.

Many strange incidents happened during those early days of married life. One Saturday evening Charles Haddon Spurgeon found himself unable to collect his thoughts and dissect the text which he had chosen for his sermon on the morrow. Utterly exhausted and dispirited, he agreed to his wife's suggestion that he should retire to rest, on the condition that she woke him early in the morning when he hoped to be better able to study and prepare for the day's work. Some hours of sound and peaceful sleep followed, but with the dawning of day Mrs. Spurgeon was aroused by hearing her husband talk in his sleep. She listened intently for it was no mere meaningless ramble of words; he was going over the subject of the verse that had appeared so difficult, and giving a full and distinct exposition of its meaning. There were no means at hand for taking notes, but praying that her memory might be strengthened, Mrs. Spurgeon repeated over and over again in her mind the striking sermon she had heard. Then all her efforts to keep awake being fruitless, she fell into a sound slumber, only to be awakened at a late hour by her husband's distress at having slept so long. "Oh, why did you let me sleep?" he cried. "What shall I do? What shall I do?" "Listen," replied Mrs. Spurgeon, and she repeated what she had heard in such strange circumstances, much to the amazement of her husband. The exposition was original and clear, and C. H. Spurgeon that morning preached a powerful

discourse built upon his wife's report of his sleeping utterances.

On September 20th twin sons were born to Mrs. Spurgeon, and the young pastor's joy knew no bounds. But the story so often told, even in the present day, of how



C. H. Spurgeon and his wife in their garden
soon after marriage.

he received the news in the pulpit and repeated it to the congregation, quoting the lines,—

Not more than others I deserve,
But God hath given me more,

is untrue. Mr. Spurgeon did not leave his house on that day, which happened to be a Saturday, and never in his life did he preach on the seventh day. It is another

instance of a falsehood repeated so often that some have at last come to believe not only that it was true, but that they themselves heard the declaration. A few weeks later the boys were solemnly dedicated to the service of God, in the presence of a number of friends, who joined with the parents in praying that the children might grow up and become active workers in the vineyard of the Lord—a petition the answer to which has been obvious for many years in the lives of Pastors Thomas and Charles Spurgeon.

CHAPTER XII.

ABUSE AND SLANDER IN THE PRESS.

UP to the time of his departure from Waterbeach the successful young preacher had met with hostile criticism only at the hands of his elder brethren in the local ministry, who in many cases were moved by jealousy at his youthfulness and popularity. But with his accession to one of the most important Nonconformist pulpits in the Metropolis, commenced a campaign of slander and mendacity such as no other preacher of modern times has had to endure. Of course a position of so much prominence and a success so sudden and extraordinary laid him open to a searching criticism; and the fact that a country lad with no college training could in a week or two draw congregations twice and thrice as large as those of the most brilliant and distinguished London preachers, besides reviving so wonderfully a cause, in many quarters regarded as dead, was likely to call forth a good deal of disparagement, and expressions of doubt as to the prospect of its continued success. Looking back, however, over the records of the period, it is not altogether easy to understand the reason for the intense bitterness of the attack which was made upon C. H. Spurgeon by writers and speakers of all classes and creeds. The line was drawn nowhere, and not only were gross personalities indulged in, but lying stories were invented, without the slightest foundation of fact, the authors, in many cases, vouching

for the "truth" as hearers or eye-witnesses. Indeed, late in life, C. H. Spurgeon declared that few of the anecdotes told of himself were true. He instanced the story of how he slid down the pulpit banisters at New Park Street Chapel, to illustrate the backslider's course. At the time the incident was supposed to have happened there were no banisters to the pulpit, which was fitted to the wall and entered from the vestry behind. "I never gave even the remotest occasion for that falsehood," he said, "and yet it is daily repeated, and I have even heard of persons who have declared that they were present when I did so, and with their own eyes saw me perform the silly trick." So recently as 1897 a minister in the United States publicly affirmed that *he* was present at New Park Street Chapel and saw C. H. Spurgeon slide down the banisters. That the statement was a deliberate untruth is clear from the construction of the pulpit, but although contradicted many times the story continues to be repeated. As a matter of fact it was told of Lorenzo Dow, years earlier, the trunk of a tree from which he was preaching to a large crowd taking the place of the pulpit banisters.

But why, it may be asked, were such calumnies heaped upon the head of the inoffensive youth, whose sole object was to benefit his fellows by making the Gospel a living force in their lives? The explanation, we believe, lies in the fact that C. H. Spurgeon was a reformer, and reformers in all ages have been the subjects of abuse and libel. At the time of his appearance in London preaching had degenerated, until it had practically ceased to be a power. Every sermon was a carefully-prepared theological essay, full of platitudes and fine periods, while the weightier matters of sin and the divine judgment of evil-doers were all but ignored. The upper classes and the wealthier

bourgeoisie liked such preaching, because it made no attempt to touch their lives of indulgence and left their consciences easy; but the lower middle classes and the proletariat saw the hollowness of the current orthodoxy, and they were beginning to drift away from the churches. There was an almost entire lack of personal religion and personal responsi-



Charles Haddon Spurgeon, his brother James,
and Mr. Joseph Passmore.

bility in the pulpit presentation of Christianity, but at the same time an unexpressed yearning was felt by the masses for a man who would revive the preaching of Whitefield and the Puritans and deal vigorously with the spiritual needs of the day. That man was sent in the person of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Like a bombshell he was thrown into

the midst of London, and all the soothing, soft-mannered and gentlemanly preachers, with their sleepy and cultured congregations, were agitated as they had never been agitated before. They could not ignore the youth. Thousands flocked to hear him: lives were changed, and men and women, hitherto careless, began to show somewhat of the spirit of presenting their bodies to Christ as "a living sacrifice." The new preacher vigorously denounced evil in every shape and form; he set forth realistically the judgment of the wicked as well as the glories of heaven, and the difference between his preaching and that of the fashionable clergymen and ministers of the day was very aptly set forth in the cartoons which began to appear at this time, such as "Brimstone and Treacle," and "The Slow Coach and the Fast Train." Propriety had been the order, but here was a boy-preacher occupying a prominent Metropolitan pulpit, who set all the proprieties at defiance. Religious England was scandalized. This upstart minister must be put down; this new light must be extinguished; and the snuffing-out process was commenced forthwith, ministers, laymen, authors and editors all joining in the work. The "polish" of the preachers and the politeness of the writers were forgotten, and rapidly the criticism and censure developed into mere vulgar vituperation and abuse. If the country lad's ministry were to be tolerated for never so short a period, then it was evident that for other divines to compete with him, the whole character of their preaching would have to be reformed. They were not prepared to take lessons from a "boy": he must be suppressed; and so no weapons were thought too foul to deal the blows that forthwith rained upon the pastor of New Park Street Chapel.

The first serious attack, bitter, but free from vulgarity,

appeared in *The Earthen Vessel* of January, 1855, signed, "Job," the writer being, as was generally acknowledged, the Rev. James Wells, of the Surrey Tabernacle. It was in reply to an article by the editor, the Rev. Charles Waters Banks, who spoke more or less kindly of the young preacher and his work. "Job" acknowledged that Charles Haddon Spurgeon had read much and possessed himself of every kind of information. "In addition to this, he appears to be a well-disposed person,—kind, benevolent, courteous, full of goodwill to his fellow-creatures,—endearing in his manners, social,—a kind of person whom it would seem almost a cruelty to dislike. The same may be, with equal truth, said both of Dr. Pusey and of Cardinal Wiseman. But, then, it becomes us to be aware, not only of the rough garment of a mock and 'arrogant humility,' but also of Amalekite-measured and delicate steps; and also of the soft raiment of refined and studied courtesy (Matt. xi. 8), and fascinating smile with, 'Surely the bitterness of death is past' (1 Sam. xv. 32). But Samuel had too much honesty about him to be thus deceived. We must, then, beware of words that are smoother than butter, and softer than oil (Psalm lv. 21). Not one of the Reformers appears to have been of this *amiable* caste; but these creature-refinements pass with thousands for religion; and tens of thousands are deluded thereby. It was by great, very great *politeness* that the serpent beguiled Eve; and, unhappily, her posterity love to have it so;—so true is it that Satan is not only a prince of darkness, but transformed also as 'an angel of light,' to deceive, if it were possible, even the very elect.

"And yet further than all this, Mr. Spurgeon was, so says the *Vessel*, brought to know the Lord when he was

only fifteen years old. Heaven grant it may prove to be so,—for the young man's sake, and for that of others also ! But I have—*most solemnly have—my doubts* as to the Divine reality of his conversion. I do not say—it is not for me to say—that he is not a regenerated man ; but this I do know, that there are conversions which are not of God ; and whatever convictions a man may have, whatever may be the agonies of his mind as to the possibility of his salvation, whatever terror anyone may experience, and however sincere they (*sic*) may be, and whatever deliverance they may have by dreams or visions, or by natural conscience, or the letter or even apparent power of the Word, yet, if they cannot stand, in their spirit and ministry, the test of the law of truth, and the testimony of God, there is no *true* light in them ; for a person may be intellectually enlightened, he may taste of the Heavenly gift, and be made partaker of the Holy Ghost, *professionally*, and taste of the good Word of God (Hebrews vi.), and yet not be regenerated, and therefore not beyond the danger of falling away, even from that portion of truth which such do hold. Such are never thoroughly convinced of what they are by nature ; Psalm xxxviii. and Romans vii. show a path to which they make some approaches, and of which they may eloquently talk, but at the same time give certain proofs that they are not truly walking therein.”

The writer then proceeded to enumerate his objections to the ministry of the young preacher. “ It is most awfully deceptive ” because “ it passes by the essentials of the work of the Holy Ghost and sets people by shoals down for Christians who are not Christians by the quickening and indwelling power of the Holy Ghost ” ; it “ may be morally and socially beneficial to some people who, perhaps, would care to hear only such an intellectually or, rather,

rhetorically-gifted man as is Mr. Spurgeon; but then they have this advantage at the cost of being *fatally deluded*." The young preacher's ministry "pays its address courteously to all; hence, in this sermon (one referred to in



"Catch 'em alive, O!"

A caricature of C. H. Spurgeon published in 1855.

Mr. Banks' article) he graciously receives us all—such a reception as it is—he who preaches all doctrine and he who preaches no doctrine; he who preaches all experience and he who preaches no experience; and hence *intellectu-*

ally High Calvinists of *easy virtue* receive such a ministry into their pulpits, at once showing that the man of sin, the spirit of apostasy, is lurking in their midst. Low Calvinists also receive him, showing that there is enough of their spirit about him to make him their *dear brother*; only his Hyperism does sometimes get a little in their way."

The writer concluded, "I would make every allowance for his youth; but while I make this allowance I am, nevertheless, thoroughly disposed to believe that we have a fair sample of what he will be even unto the end," a statement that, owing to the way in which it was understood, needed a qualification from "Job," who wrote in a later number of *The Earthen Vessel*, "It is to be regretted that some persons have tried to make the above (the ambiguous statement) mean that as Mr. Spurgeon is in a state of nature now, he will so continue even unto the end; whereas I neither did, *nor do I mean*, any such thing: all I mean is that his *ministry*, as it now is, is, I am strongly disposed to believe, a fair sample of what *it* will be even unto the end."

A heated controversy followed in the pages of *The Earthen Vessel*, but the editor continued to declare his faith in the honesty of C. H. Spurgeon and the Divine value of his work. "In the course of Mr. Spurgeon's ministry," he wrote, "there are frequently to be found such gushings forth of love to God, of ravishing delights in Christ, of the powerful anointings of the Holy Ghost, as compel us to believe that God is in him of a truth. We must confess that is the deep-wrought conviction of our spirit; and we dare not conceal it. Why should we? We may be condemned by many; but whatever it may cast upon us,—whoever may discard us,—we must acknowledge that while in these sermons we have met with

sentences that perplex us, and with what some might consider contradiction, still, we have found those things which have been powerful demonstrations of the indwelling of THE LIFE AND THE LOVE OF THE TRIUNE GOD in the preacher's heart."

The Rev. James Wells, however, continued to show his hostility to the young minister who was so soon to outstrip him in his ability and success as a preacher, and it is difficult to believe that the pastor of Surrey Tabernacle was altogether disinterested in his opposition, for later on, when C. H. Spurgeon's divine mission and the value of his ministry were generally recognized by ministers of all denominations, Mr. Wells refused to fulfil an engagement to preach because his brother-minister was to take one of the services on the same day. Did he fear a comparison of his own preaching with that of his brilliant young brother?

The secular Press was not long in following the lead given by "Job." On February 27th of the same year, *The Ipswich Express* published a communication from its London correspondent, headed, "A Clerical Poltroon," which contained the first of those untrue stories invented with the deliberate intention of defaming the young preacher's character. After declaring that all his discourses were "redolent of bad taste," and "vulgar and theatrical," the writer continued, "Actually I hear the other Sunday the gifted divine had the impudence before preaching to say, as there were many young ladies present, that he was engaged—that his heart it was another's, he wished them clearly to understand that—that he might have no presents sent him, no attentions paid him, no worsted slippers worked for him by the young ladies present. I suppose the dear divine," added the writer,

"has been rendered uncomfortable by the fondness of his female auditors; at any rate such is the impression he wishes to leave." A few days later the story was contradicted in *The Ipswich Express*, and a rather lame apology published, but those responsible for the conduct of the journal were evidently hostile to Charles Haddon Spurgeon,



"Brimstone and Treacle."

From a cartoon published soon after C. H. Spurgeon came to London. The figure on the right is intended for a fashionable preacher of the day.

for when in April and May of the same year they reviewed certain of his sermons, the series of reviews concluded thus: "There is enough foolishness in London to keep up, in flourishing style, Tom Thumb, Charles Kean, the Living Skeleton, C. H. Spurgeon, and many other delusions all at once, and yet to allow a vast mass of sober-minded

citizens to go 'the even tenor of their way,' quite unaffected by such transient turmoils. Our decided opinion is, that in no other place but London could Mr. Spurgeon have caused the *furor* that he has excited. It must not be forgotten that in London, or anywhere else, a religious delusion is, of all others, the most easy to inaugurate and carry on. When a man obtains possession of a pulpit, he has credit for meaning well, at any rate, and expressions are thenceforward often listened to from him, without hostile criticism, which would not be tolerated, if enunciated from any other position. Mr. Spurgeon's career is suggestive of various interesting questions. If such a man can obtain, in a short time, the position he now certainly occupies, does that fact say much for the condition of the religious world? If Mr. S. be, as is stated, the very best among a large section of preachers, what sort of a man is the very worst of that section? Does the pulpit, upon the whole, keep pace with the age, or does it lag behind? Will not the immense success of such as Spurgeon go far to account for that aversion of men of taste to the public profession of Evangelical religion complained of long ago by John Foster?"

Although so promptly contradicted, the story of the slippers was copied into journals all over the country, and it has continued to show signs of life even in the present day, for the writer himself has heard it told in a slightly modified form of another popular preacher, still living, who was trained in C. H. Spurgeon's Pastors' College. The young preacher's own opinion of the libel is set forth in a letter which he wrote to his father on March 4th, 1855: "Do not be grieved at the slanderous libel in this week's *Express*," he wrote. "Of course it is *all a lie*, without an atom of foundation; and while the whole of London is

talking of me, and thousands are unable to get near the door, the opinion of a penny-a-liner is of little consequence. . . . I only fear for you. I do not like you to be grieved. For myself I WILL REJOICE; the devil is roused, the Church is awakening, and I am now counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. . . . Good ballast, father, good ballast."

Exactly a year after C. H. Spurgeon had been invited to occupy permanently the pulpit of New Park Street, there was an attack upon him in *The Essex Standard*. The writer, signing himself "Iconoclast," described a Sunday evening service at Exeter Hall which he was supposed to have attended. He condemned the exposition, he condemned the prayer, which he falsely declared to be an "arrogant dictation to the Deity," and he condemned the sermon. Deliberate misrepresentation and falsehood were the foundations upon which this structure of calumny was based, and "Iconoclast" proved to be the bitterest of all the young preacher's opponents in the secular Press up to that time. "Mr. Spurgeon loves controversy," said the writer, "but with the modesty peculiar to himself told us that nowadays 'he found no foeman worthy of *his* steel.' His favourite action is that of washing his hands and then rubbing them dry. He belongs to the peripatetic or Walker school, perpetually walking up and down as an actor treading the boards of a theatre. His style is that of the vulgar colloquial varied by rant. . . . All the most solemn mysteries of our holy religion are by him rudely, roughly and impiously handled. Mystery is vulgarised, sanctity profaned, common sense outraged and decency disgusted. . . . His rantings are interspersed with coarse anecdotes that split the ears of the groundlings; and this is popularity! and this is the 'religious furor' of London!

and this young divine it is that throws Wesley and Whitefield into the shade! and this is the preaching and this the theology that five thousand persons from Sabbath to Sabbath hear, receive and approve, and—profit by it!” This attack was followed up in the next number of the same newspaper by a letter from one signing himself, “A Lover of Propriety.” He described the letter of “Iconoclast” as “a faithful delineation of the young preacher who is making so great a stir just now,” and explained that having heard C. H. Spurgeon at Earl’s Colne, he was “extremely disgusted” at “a young man of twenty-one years assuming airs and adopting a language which would be scarcely tolerated in the man of grey hairs. In common with many others,” continued this “Lover of Propriety,” “though obliged to smile during his performances, we felt more inclined to weep over such a prostitution of the pulpit and hours devoted to professedly religious worship. His prayer to us appeared most profanely familiar; and never were we impressed more with the contrast between this effusion and the beautifully-simple, reverential and devout language of the Church of England Liturgy, and said within our hearts, ‘Would that Dissenters would bind down their ministers to use those forms of sound words. rather than allow of these rhapsodies which to all persons of taste and true devotion must have been very offensive.’”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon’s trenchant comment on these letters is interesting. “The devil has barked again in *The Essex Standard*,” he wrote in the postscript of a note to his future wife. “It contains another letter. Never mind; when Satan opens his mouth he gives me an opportunity of ramming my sword down his throat.”

And now the arrows of slander and invective fell thick and fast. One after another the newspapers published

bitter and censorious articles upon the young pastor of New Park Street, but these only served to make him better known, to increase his congregations and to bind his flock closer together. "A star has appeared in the misty plain of orthodoxy," wrote the London correspondent of *The Bucks Chronicle*, on April 24th, 1855, "and such a star, that, were it not for the badge which encircles that part of it called neck, we should for the more distinguishing characteristic write comet. It has made its appearance in Exeter Hall, and is to be seen on the first day of the week by putting a few 'browns' into a basket. The star is a Spurgeon—not a carp, but much resembling a pike. Thousands flock weekly to see it; and it shines grandiloquently. It is a parson—a young parson. Merciful goodness! such a parson seldom talks. It is a railway speed of joining sentences, conflagrasticated into a discourse. It is now near eleven o'clock a.m. He rises to read; and as if the Book of Inspiration was not fine enough in its composition, enters into explanations of his own as apt as a coalheaver would give of Thucydides (*sic*). Never mind! the great gun of starology in theology has a mission. Not to convert the doggerelisms of Timbuctoo into rationalisms—not to demonstrate the loving-kindness of the great Fatherhood—not to teach the forgiveness of Jehovah Jirah (*sic*) in His great heart of mercy—not to proclaim the extension of the kingdom of the Master of assemblies. No! but to teach that if Jack Scroggins was put down in the black book before the great curtain of events was unfolded, that the said Jack Scroggins, in spite of all he may do or say, will and must tumble into the limbo of a brimstone hell to be punished and roasted without any prospect of cessation or shrinking into a dried cinder; because Jack Scroggins had done what Jack Scroggins

could not help doing. . . . It is not pleasant to be frightened into the portal of bliss by the hissing bubbles of the seething cauldron. It is not Christian-like to say, 'God must wash brains in the Hyper-Calvinism a Spurgeon teaches before man can enter Heaven.' It does not harmonize with the quiet majesty of the Nazarene. It does not fall like manna for hungry souls; but is like the gush of the pouring rain in a thunderstorm which makes the flowers to hang their heads, looking up afterwards as if nothing had happened. When the Exeter Hall stripling talks of Deity, let him remember that He is superior to profanity, and that blasphemy from a parson is as great a crime as when the lowest grade of humanity utters the brutal oath at which the virtuous stand aghast."

How far from the truth such a description of the young minister's preaching was, can be clearly seen by a perusal of his sermons published at this period. Indeed it is remarkable that in one discourse delivered in the same year as the above attack was made, he said exactly the opposite of what the reporter declared he had said. It is worth while to give an extract from this sermon to show how barefaced and deliberate was the misrepresentation. "Enthusiastic divines," said C. H. Spurgeon, "have thought that men were to be brought to virtue by the hissings of the boiling cauldron; they have imagined that by beating a hell-drum in the ears of men they should make them believe the Gospel; that by the terrific sights and sounds of Sinai's mountain they should drive men to Calvary. They have preached perpetually, 'Do this and thou art damned.' In their preaching there preponderates a voice horrible and terrifying; if you listened to them you might think you sat near the mouth of the pit and heard the 'dismal groans and sullen moans' and all the shrieks

of the tortured ones in perdition. Men think that by these means sinners will be brought to the Saviour. They, however, in my opinion, think wrongly. Men are frightened into hell but not into Heaven. Men are sometimes driven to Sinai by powerful preaching. Far be it from us to condemn the use of the law for 'the law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ'; but if you want to get a man to Christ, the best way is to bring Christ to the man. It is not by preaching law and terrors that men are made to love God.

" 'Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,
Soon dissolves a heart of stone.'

"I sometimes preach 'the terror of the Lord,' as Paul did when he said, 'Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men'; but I do it, as did the apostle, to bring them to a sense of their sins. The way to bring men to Jesus, to give them peace, to give them joy, to give them salvation through Christ, is by God the Spirit's assistance to preach Jesus Christ!"

On the same day that the hostile criticism just referred to appeared, *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* published an article of a somewhat similar character. It described C. H. Spurgeon as "the Exeter Hall religious demagogue," and after comparing his popularity with that of Dr. Chalmers and Edward Irving, though it would not "dishonour" such men by comparing *him* with them, it proceeded, "They preached the Gospel with all the fervour of earnest natures, Mr. Spurgeon preaches *himself*. He is nothing unless he is an actor—unless exhibiting that matchless impudence which is his great characteristic, indulging in coarse familiarity with



The Slow Coach.



The Fast Train.

Reduced facsimiles of two cartoons published soon after Charles Haddon Spurgeon came to London.

holy things, declaiming in a ranting and colloquial style, strutting up and down the platform as though he were at the Surrey Theatre, and boasting of his own intimacy with Heaven with nauseating frequency." The writer then tells how he "turned away in disgust" from the "coarse sentiments" and "clap-trap style" of the preacher's sermons. "It would seem that the poor young man's brain is turned by the notoriety he has acquired, and the incense offered at his shrine. . . . He glories in his isolation, and is intoxicated by the draughts of popularity that have fired his feverish brain. He is a nine days' wonder—a comet that has suddenly shot across the religious atmosphere. He has gone up like a rocket and ere long will come down like a stick." But *Tempora mutantur*: it is worth while noting that the same journal in 1898 spoke of C. H. Spurgeon as "this noble Puritan preacher and saintly Christian." The writer in the Sheffield paper told the story of the slippers in all seriousness, and this was repeated soon afterwards, with embellishments, in *The Lambeth Gazette*. "He (the preacher)," said that journal, "is a very young man, too, and the young 'sisters' are dancing mad after him. He has received slippers enough from these lowly-minded damsels to open a shoe-shop; and were it not that he recently advertised them that he was 'engaged,' he would very soon have been able to open a fancy bazaar with the nicknacks that were pouring in upon him."

Time seemed to have no effect in softening the pens of the critics. Week after week and month after month the attacks continued. *The Bristol Advertiser* for April 12th, 1856, gave a homily upon "Quackeries in public as well as in professional life," and spoke of the existence of "Dr. Holloways among the vendors of religious doctrine

as well as among the vendors of patent medicines," who, "get advertised everywhere" and "have agents all about the country ready and willing to assist them in pushing the trade. Now what is there in Mr. Spurgeon," it continued, "to account for the extraordinary sensation he makes everywhere? It is not the doctrine he preaches, for that is 'orthodox'; that is, it is preached by a thousand other clergymen. It is not his personal appearance, for that is but ordinary: his forehead is low; his eye is small, and though capable of vivid flashes of self-appreciation, not radiant with those 'heavenly' rays by which sentimental ladies are usually fascinated; his figure is broad and stumpy; his manners are rude and awkward. In short, we can find no genuine qualities in this gentleman sufficient to explain the unrivalled notoriety he has acquired. If he were simple in his pretensions and had the serene and sacred dignity of religious earnestness to support him, his destitution of refinement, his evident ignorance, his positive vulgarities of expression and of manner might be forgiven. We should feel that he was doing good in an important direction, and that to follow him with criticism or contempt would be in a sort profane. Or if he possessed unusual powers of mind, imagination or speech, we could understand how many would seek to hear him. But his intellect not only lacks culture, it is evidently of meagre grasp. . . . Solemnly do we express our regret that inscience so unblushing, intellect so feeble, flippancy so ostentatious and manners so rude, should in the name of religion and in connection with the Church, receive the acknowledgment of even a momentary popularity."

Even *The Daily News* described the preaching as "pulpit buffoonery," and spoke of the young minister's "utter ignorance of any theology except that current among

the sect to which he belongs; and of his ludicrous misinterpretations of Scripture occasioned by his want of even a moderate acquaintance with Oriental customs and forms of language." It finally prophesied that the preacher would be obliged to become more and more extravagant as his audience became more and more exacting, and the end might be an extensive development of dangerous fanaticism.

This selection from the scores, if not hundreds, of abusive articles and letters that appeared in the public Press at this time does not include the worst of the libels published. Some were so scurrilous and blasphemous that they cannot be quoted here, and it is surprising that self-respecting editors ever allowed such statements to appear in their pages.

Meanwhile, how was the young preacher affected by the undeserved and uncalled for onslaught of the critics? We have seen that in his letters to his father and future wife he made light of the matter, but this was on account of his generous nature, which did not like to see his loved ones worried. His true feelings were better expressed in a sermon preached in March, 1857, in which he said, "I shall never forget the circumstance, when, after I thought I had made a full consecration to Christ, a slanderous report against my character came to my ears, and my heart was broken in agony because I should have to lose that, in preaching Christ's gospel. I fell on my knees, and said, 'Master, I will not keep back even my character for Thee. If I must lose that, too, then let it go; it is the dearest thing I have; but it shall go, if, like my Master, they shall say I have a devil, and am mad; or, like Him, I am a drunken man and a wine-bibber.'"

Even from his friends he was not able to conceal com-

pletely the effect of the cruel blows, for in a letter to his *fiancée*, dated May, 1855, he wrote that he was "down in the valley" because of desperate attacks in two newspapers. His work, however, did not suffer. The preacher knew that his conscience was void of offence to God and man, and the bitterness of the attacks only threw him more and more in dependence upon the Divine Father, to whom alone he held himself responsible for the execution of his ministry. Referring to the matter in a sermon at Exeter Hall, in the midst of the campaign of slander, he said, "Young men, are you striving to do good, and do others impute wrong motives to you? Do not be particular about answering them; just go straight on and your life will be the best refutation of the calumny"; surely a prophetic utterance in view of after events. The most cruel misrepresentation of all was that C. H. Spurgeon in his services kept *himself* well to the front: no preacher ever sought so to hide himself and to exalt his Lord. A letter which he wrote to his wife at this time reveals his true humility of spirit, "I shall feel deeply indebted to you," he said, "if you will pray very earnestly for me. I fear I am not so full of love to God as I used to be. I lament my sad decline in spiritual things. You and others may not have observed it, but I am now conscious of it, and a sense thereof has put bitterness in my cup of joy. Oh! what is it to be popular, to be successful, to have abundance, even to have love so sweet as yours,—if I should be left of God to fall, and to depart from His ways? I tremble at the giddy height on which I stand, and could wish myself unknown, for indeed I am unworthy of all my honours and my fame. I trust I shall now commence anew, and wear no longer the linsey-woolsey garment; but I beseech you, blend your hearty prayers

with mine, that two of us may be agreed, and thus will you promote the usefulness, and holiness, and happiness of one whom you love."

Some months later, he wrote:—"The Patriot has a glowing account of me, which will tend to make me more popular than ever. MAY GOD PRESERVE ME! I believe all my little troubles have just kept me right. I should have been upset by flattery, had it not been for this long balancing rod."

After a time the young preacher grew inured to falsehood and spite. "The stings at last," he says, "caused me no more pain than if I had been made of iron; but at first they were galling enough. Do not be surprised, dear friends, if you have the same experience; and if it comes, count it no strange thing, for in this way the saints have been treated in all time. Thank God, the wounds are not fatal, nor of long continuance! Time brings ease, and use creates hardihood. No real harm has come to any of us who have run the gauntlet of abuse; not even a bruise remains."

As a matter of fact, nothing but ultimate good resulted from the attacks, for the more the preacher was abused and vilified the more the people flocked to hear him in thousands, and the more numerous were the conversions. "The Press has *kicked* me quite long enough; now they are beginning to *lick* me," he wrote after a complimentary article had appeared in *The Globe*; "but one is as good as the other so long as it helps to fill our place of worship." One of the criticisms of his preaching was that the majority of those who listened to it were people who had never attended a place of worship before. Surely no greater testimony to the power of his ministry could have been declared than this. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, in

one of his early sermons to an immense London congregation, said, "I have looked upon the hundreds, nay, upon the thousands, whom I have around me, who were once the vilest of the vile—drunkards, swearers, and such-like—and I now see them 'clothed and in their right mind,' walking in holiness and in the fear of God; and I have said within myself, 'This must be the truth, then, because I see its marvellous effects. It is true, because it is efficient for purposes which error never could accomplish. It exerts an influence among the lowest order of mortals and over the most abominable of our race.'" Many of these reformed characters had originally been led to visit the services merely out of curiosity to see the much-vilified preacher.

After a time the abuse became less virulent, and then the young minister declared: "I do not expect to see so many conversions in this place as I had a year ago, when I had far fewer hearers. Do you ask why? Why, a year ago, I was abused by everybody; to mention my name, was to mention the name of the most abominable buffoon that ever lived. The mere utterance of it brought forth oaths and curses; with many men it was the name of contempt, kicked about the street as a football; but then God gave me souls by hundreds, who were added to my church, and in one year it was my happiness personally to see not less than a thousand who had then been converted. I do not expect that now. My name is somewhat esteemed, and the great ones of the earth think it no dishonour to sit at my feet; but this makes me fear lest my God should forsake me while the world esteems me. I would rather be despised and slandered than aught else. This assembly, that you think so grand and fine, I would readily part with, if by such a loss I could gain a greater

blessing. . . . It is for us to recollect, in all times of popularity, that 'Crucify Him! Crucify Him!' follows fast upon the heels of 'Hosanna!' and that the crowd of to-day, if dealt with faithfully, may turn into the handful of to-morrow; for men love not plain speaking. We should learn to be despised, learn to be contemned, learn to be slandered, and then we shall learn to be made useful by God. Down on my knees have I often fallen, with the hot sweat rising from my brow, under some fresh slander poured upon me; in an agony of grief, my heart has been well-nigh broken; till at last I learned the art of bearing all, and caring for none. And now my grief runneth in another line, it is just the opposite; I fear lest God should forsake me, to prove that He is the Author of salvation, that it is not in the preacher, that it is not in the crowd, that it is not in the attention I can attract, but in God, and in God alone. This I hope I can say from my heart,—if to be made as the mire of the streets again, if to be the laughing-stock of fools and the song of the drunkard once more, will make me more serviceable to my Master, and more useful to His cause, I will prefer it to all this multitude, or to all the applause that man could give."

Probably the only letter that C. H. Spurgeon wrote to the Press throughout this period of censure was to the Editor of *The Chelmsford Chronicle*, who had published an article of a somewhat friendly character. It bore the date April 24th, 1855, and was as follows: "I am usually careless of the notices of papers concerning myself, referring all honour to my Master and believing that dishonourable articles are but advertisements for me and bring more under the sound of the Gospel. But you, my dear sir (I know not why), have been pleased to speak so favourably of my labours that I think it only right

that I should thank you. If I could have done so personally I would have availed myself of the pleasure, but the best substitute is by letter. Amid a constant din of abuse it is pleasant to poor flesh and blood to hear *one* favourable voice. I am far from deserving much that you have said in my praise, but as I am equally undeserving of the coarse censure poured on me by *The Essex Standard*, etc., etc., I will set the one against the other. I am neither eloquent nor learned, but the Head of the Church has given me sympathy with the masses, love to the poor and the means of winning the attention of the ignorant and unenlightened. I never sought popularity, and I cannot tell how it is so many come to hear me; but shall I now change? To please the polite critic, shall I leave '*the people*' who so much require a simple and stirring style? I am, perhaps, 'vulgar,' and so on, but it is not intentional, save that I *must* and *will* make the people listen. My firm conviction is that we have quite enough *polite* preachers, and that 'the many' require a change. God has owned me to the most degraded and off-cast; let others serve their class: these are mine, and to them I must keep. My sole reason for thus troubling you is one of gratitude to a disinterested friend. You may another time have good cause to censure me;—do so, as I am sure you will, with all heartiness; but my young heart shall not soon forget 'a friend.'"

CHAPTER XIII.

FRIENDLY TRIBUTES.

IT must not be supposed that amid the outpouring of abuse and vituperation, no powerful voices were raised on behalf of the young preacher. In the correspondence which followed the publication of "Job's" strictures in *The Earthen Vessel*, many spoke in favour of C. H. Spurgeon, and it has already been shown that the Rev. Charles Waters Banks held a high opinion of the young pastor's mission. Correspondents in other journals, too, expressed plainly their opinion that the new pulpit orator was a worthy successor to Bunyan and Wesley and Whitefield. But the first secular newspaper of prominence to espouse the cause of the abused minister was *The Morning Advertiser*, at that time under the able editorship of James Grant. This journal was then second only to *The Times* in importance, and two articles published on February 19th, 1855, and February 18th, 1856, were masterpieces of critical foresight. In the former it was declared that there could be no doubt that Charles Haddon Spurgeon possessed superior talents, while "in some of his happier flights," the article said, "he rises to a high order of pulpit oratory." Some useful advice was tendered in a kindly manner, which the young preacher seems to have taken in a right spirit and followed out. "He is quite an original preacher," concluded the writer, "and therefore will always draw large congregations, and consequently may

he eminently made the means of doing great good to classes of persons who might never otherwise be brought within the sound of a faithfully-preached Gospel. He has evidently made George Whitefield his model; and, like that unparalleled preacher, that prince of pulpit orators, is very fond of striking apostrophes." Years later C. H. Spurgeon himself declared that his model, if he might have such a thing in due subordination to his Lord, was George Whitefield.

In February, 1856, James Grant discerned "a decided improvement both as regards his matter and manner." The preacher's doctrinal views, it was explained, remained unchanged, but, "He does not speak so often with asperity of other preachers of the Gospel, whom he conceives—and we must say in the main rightly—to be unfaithful to their high calling. There is, too, a marked and gratifying improvement in Mr. Spurgeon as regards the manner of his pulpit appearances." Again he was compared favourably with George Whitefield, and the writer finally praised his humility and his originality. "When this able and eloquent preacher first made his appearance in the horizon of the religious world and dazzled the masses in the Metropolis by his brilliancy, we were afraid that he might either get intoxicated by the large draughts of popularity which he had daily to drink, or that he would not be able, owing to a want of variety, to sustain the reputation he had so suddenly acquired. Neither result has happened. Whatever may be his defects, either as a man or as a preacher of the Gospel, it is due to him to state that he has not been spoiled by popular applause. Constitutionally he has in him no small amount of self-esteem, but so far from its growing with his daily extending fame, he appears to be more humble and more subdued than when he first burst

on our astonished gaze. With regard again to our other fear that his excellence as a preacher would not be sustained, the event has, we rejoice to say, no less agreeably proved the groundlessness of our apprehensions. There is no falling off whatever. On the contrary, he is in some respects improving with the lapse of time. We fancy we can see his striking originality to greater advantage than at first."

Other papers followed in championing the young preacher. *The Western Times* (Exeter) declared that he bid fair to rival, if not to eclipse, such men as Carey, Gill, Rippon and Robert Hall, while *The Christian Weekly News*, after acknowledging that many who had listened to him had gone away to speak ill of his name, declared that "others and by far the larger number have been stimulated by his earnestness, instructed by his arguments and melted by his appeals. We have seen among his hearers," continued the writer, "ministers of mark of nearly every section of the Christian Church; laymen well-known in all circles as the supporters of the benevolent and evangelical institutions of the day; and citizens of renown from the chief magistrate down to the parish beadle. That the man who causes such a furor must possess some power not commonly found in men of his profession will only be doubted by his detractors. . . . May the Lord continue to hold him as a star in His right hand, and through his instrumentality bring many souls to bow to the sceptre of His love and mercy."

One of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's earliest literary friends was the Rev. Edwin Paxton Hood, who, in his book, "The Lamps of the Temple," published in 1886, gave some plain home truths to the ministerial censors for the way in which they had boycotted and maligned



The two conductors. From cartoons published when Charles Haddon Spurgeon was drawing enormous crowds to his services.

their younger brother. He especially referred to the conduct of the Rev. James Wells in refusing to associate with C. H. Spurgeon in the opening of a country chapel. "Among things—remarkable or not remarkable according to the reader's ideas," said the writer, "is the treatment of the young preacher by his brethren—shall we say brethren?—in the ministry. We understand they have pretty generally agreed to regard him as a black sheep. His character is good—unexceptionable;—his doctrines have no dangerous heresy in them;—still he is tabooed. The other day, a very eminent minister, whose portrait we have attempted to sketch in this volume, and whom we certainly regarded as incapable of so much meanness when we were sketching it—perhaps the most eminent of the London Dissenting ministers—was invited to open a chapel in the country—at any rate, to take the evening service; but he found that Spurgeon was to take the morning, and he smartly refused to mix in the affair; it was pitiable, and we discharged ourselves, as in duty bound, of an immense quantity of pity upon the head of the poor jealous man who dreaded lest the shadow of a rival should fall prematurely over his pulpit. No; usually the ministers have not admired this advent; the tens of thousands of persons who flock to hear the youth preach his strong, nervous Gospel, do not at all conciliate them—perhaps rather exasperate them."

Mr. Hood then went on to praise the young minister's preaching, and to combat those who said that Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a mere imitator of other preachers. "Robert Hall," he caustically remarks, "was charged with imitating Robert Robinson, of Cambridge;—in fact, there was not the slightest resemblance between those two minds." C. H. Spurgeon, in the writer's opinion, had "the

unbridled and undisciplined fancy of Hervey without his elegance ; but instead of that, the drollery of Berridge and the ubiquitous earnestness of Rowland Hill in his best days. But it is probable," he added, "that many of us walk far too gingerly in our estimate of public speech. He who determines never to use a word that shall grate harshly on the ears of a refined taste, may be certain that he will never be very extensively useful ; the people love the man who will condescend to their idiom, and the greatest preachers—those who have been the great apostles of a nation—have always condescended to this. Bossuet, Massillon, Hall, Chalmers, McAll, were the doctors of the pulpit ; at their feet sat the refinement, the scholarship, the politeness of their times ; but such men as Luther and Latimer, St. Clara and Knox, Whitefield and Christmas Evans—such men have always seized on the prevailing dialect and made it tell with immense power on their auditors."

This splendid tribute concluded with an emphatic declaration of belief that C. H. Spurgeon's power and ability would last—that he himself would wear but not wear out. A sly knock was given at those preachers "who consume the midnight oil and make it their boast that they can only produce one sermon a week," but some of whose discourses nevertheless were characterized by "great mental poverty." With regard to Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the writer said, "His present amazing popularity will of course subside, but he will still be amazingly followed ; and what he is now, we prophesy, he will, on the whole, remain : for polished diction we shall not look to him ; for the long and stately argument we shall not look to him ; for the original and profound thought we shall not look to him ; for the clear and lucid criticism we shall

not look to him ; but for bold and convincing statements of Evangelical truth, for a faithful grappling with convictions, for happy and pertinent illustrations, for graphic description and for searching common sense we shall look, and we believe we shall seldom look in vain. In a word, he preaches—not to metaphysicians or logicians—neither to poets nor to *savants*—to masters of erudition or masters of rhetoric ; he preaches to men.”

One other friendly tribute must be referred to as it caused a considerable stir in the religious world when it appeared. It was in the form of a pamphlet, entitled, “*Why so Popular? An Hour with Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.* By a Doctor of Divinity,” and the remarks were addressed personally to the young preacher, who was described as standing on an eminence “which since the days of Whitefield no minister—with a single exception, if, indeed, there be one—of any church in this realm, has attained.” The writer realized that C. H. Spurgeon’s ministry was one in which the Divine hand was marvellously extended to bless, and with generous encouragement he concluded, “Go on, my brother, and may God give you a still larger amount of ministerial success! ‘Preach the Word,’ the old theology, that ‘Glorious gospel of the blessed God,’ for which apostles laboured and martyrs died. In all your teachings continue to exhibit the cross of Christ as occupying in the Christian revelation, like the sun in our planetary system, the very centre, and imparting to all their light and heat. Tell the people that every doctrine, duty or promise of the Scripture stands intimately connected with the cross, and from that connection derives its meaning and value to us. Thus exhibiting the whole system of Divine Truth in its harmony and symmetry—judging even by your own antecedents—what a glorious



The young lion of the pulpit.

The funny old woman of the pulpit.

An early cartoon of Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

prospect of honour, happiness and usefulness presents itself to your view! A star in the churches—a star of no mean magnitude, of no ordinary brilliancy—you may be honoured to diffuse, very luminously, the derived glories you possess, and having run your appointed course, ultimately set—but far distant be the day!—as sets the morning star,—

“ ‘Which falls not down behind the darkened West,
Nor hides obscured amid the tempests of the sky,
But melts away into the light of Heaven.’ ”

Copies of all the newspaper cuttings relating to her husband, both complimentary and abusive, in those early days, were preserved by Mrs. Spurgeon, to whom they used to be handed by the young preacher as they appeared, with the remark, “Here’s another contribution for your museum.” They were collected in a large book which bears upon its title-page, in Charles Haddon Spurgeon’s handwriting, the very significant and expressive title, “Facts, Fiction and Facetiæ.”

CHAPTER XIV.

SERVICES AWAY FROM LONDON : FIRST LITERARY WORK.

MOST ministers would have found the gigantic labours of the New Park Street pastorate more than enough to occupy all their time and exhaust all their energies. Such, however, was not the case with C. H. Spurgeon. In addition to preaching several times a week from his own pulpit, and visiting various parts of the Metropolis, he also travelled about the country addressing congregations as large as those which listened to him in London. Here is a typical list of engagements for one week, taken from a letter written to a friend at Cambridge. The list was given by way of explanation for the brevity of his correspondence.

“I have been this week to Leighton Buzzard, Fooks Cray and Chatham; everywhere no room for the crowd. Next week I am to be thus occupied :—

“*Sabbath.* Morning and evening, New Park Street;
Afternoon to address the Schools.

Monday. Morning at Howard Hinton’s Chapel.
Afternoon, New Park Street.
Evening, New Park Street.

Tuesday. Afternoon, Leighton.
Evening, Leighton.

Wednesday. Morning, Zion Chapel, Whitechapel.
Evening, Zion Chapel, Whitechapel.

Thursday. Morning, Dalston.
Evening, New Park Street.

Friday. Morning, Dr. Fletcher's Chapel.
Evening, Mr. Rogers' Chapel, Brixton."

Fourteen sermons in six days, to be delivered at places far distant from one another! The discomfort of travelling in those days severely tried the young minister, and his first long journey by rail—that to Scotland in July, 1855—was an experience long to be remembered. Unable to sleep a moment all the way, he felt very unwell, and arrived at Glasgow, "tired, begrimed with dust, sleepy, not over high in spirits, and with a dreadful cold in my head." A sleep of twelve hours in a comfortable bed left him as tired as when he stepped from the train, and no wonder he declared he would not travel so far again in one day. The trip was primarily intended as a holiday and rest, but almost every day he had to fulfil preaching engagements, and in a letter to his *fiancée* from Aberfeldy, describing crowded services there, he writes, "Unless I go to the North Pole I never can get away from my holy labour."

In Glasgow, on the first Sunday spent in Scotland, he preached twice, crowds at the evening service standing outside the church to hear the sermon through the open windows, while hundreds had to be turned away. The secular papers of the city were full of praise, but the hostility of a certain section of the religious community was again manifest by an abusive article in *The Christian News*, which spoke of the services as "exhibitions" that "amused or disgusted a respectable audience," and

referred to the "buffoonery" and "the mask of the clown." On a flying visit to the Highlands a large crowd again gathered, but here the cold reserve of the Scot was exhibited inside the chapel, although outside the members of the congregation expressed their delight at the preaching. In the middle of this "holiday" a hasty journey had to be made to Bradford to fulfil a preaching engagement, and there the Music Hall, holding a thousand persons more than Exeter Hall, was crowded to excess. For hours before the service the streets in the vicinity were blocked by a solid mass of men and women, and almost as many as secured admission had to be excluded owing to lack of accommodation. The collections in aid of the Sunday-schools that day amounted to £144. From Bradford C. H. Spurgeon went to Stockton and preached to several thousands, returning to Glasgow by way of Edinburgh, where in Queen Street Hall he addressed a large concourse of people who had gathered to hear him, despite a heavy downpour of rain. This service was remarkable from the fact that C. H. Spurgeon declared the Spirit of God had been pleased to desert him. "I could not speak as usually I have done. I was obliged to tell the people that the chariot wheels were taken off, and that the chariot dragged along very heavily. . . . It humbled me bitterly; and if I could I would have hidden myself in any obscure corner of the earth. I felt as if I should speak no more in the Name of the Lord; and then the thought came, 'Oh, thou art an ungrateful creature! Hath not God spoken by thee hundreds of times? And this once, when He would not do so, wilt thou upbraid Him for it? Nay, rather thank Him that He hath so long stood by thee; and if once He hath forsaken thee, admire His goodness, that thus He would keep thee humble.'" The reason

suggested by the preacher for the lack of power on this occasion is interesting. "Some may imagine," he says, "that want of study brought me into that condition, but I can honestly affirm that it was not so. I think that I am bound to give myself unto reading and not to tempt the Spirit by unthought of effusions. I always deem it a duty to seek my sermons from my Master, and implore Him to impress them on my mind; but on that occasion I think I had prepared even more carefully than I ordinarily do, so that unpreparedness was not the reason for the lack of force I then mourned. The simple fact is this, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth'; and sometimes the winds themselves are still. Therefore if I rest on the Spirit I cannot expect that I should always feel His power alike. What could I do without His celestial influence? To that I owe everything. Other servants of the Lord have had experiences similar to mine. In the 'Life of Whitefield' we read that sometimes under one of his sermons two thousand persons would profess to be saved, and many of them were really so; at other times, he preached just as powerfully and no conversions were recorded. Why was that? Simply because in the one case the Holy Spirit went with the Word; and in the other case He did not. All the Heavenly result of preaching is owing to the Divine Spirit sent from above."

The Christian News again abused the preacher, falsely stating that he gloried in the fact that he never prepared before preaching, and describing his oratory as "unequal and clumsy in the extreme." "Mr. S., in our estimation," said this most Christian of Christian journals, "is just a spoiled boy, with abilities not more than mediocre, and will for certain, if he do not retrace his steps, share the fate of the 'early gooseberry' or the 'monster cucumber

that appear almost annually in the columns of the newspapers—sink into obscurity, leaving only the memorial of his career, that he was, and that he has descended to that nihility from which by puffing and blustering he originally and unworthily sprang.”

In Glasgow he again preached twice on the Sunday, and at the evening service, although the great Greyfriars Church was crowded to the doors, twenty thousand persons had to go away unable to obtain admission. The secular papers on the following day described the preacher as possessing genius in an unusual degree, and contradicted the various slanderous statements that had been circulated as to his irreverence and presumption. He returned to London after this hasty and exhausting preaching tour, having convinced all with whom he came in contact, except the hopelessly biassed, of his remarkable power and ability, and the reality of his Divine mission.

In all the English towns which he visited similar scenes were witnessed. At Trowbridge, for instance, one Monday, after preaching in the afternoon and evening to crowded congregations, a third service, to which many were unable to gain admission, had to be held after ten o'clock at night. Again, in South Wales, near Risca, the Welsh miners kept the young minister well-nigh to midnight preaching three sermons, one after another, almost without a break, the church being filled to suffocation throughout the long-continued service. On another occasion in the same neighbourhood a mighty gathering was addressed in the open air, when the working of the Spirit of God was so manifest that men and women “were swayed to and fro under the Heavenly message as the corn is moved in waves by the summer winds.” Perhaps the service away from London at this period, to which he always looked back

with the greatest pleasure, was that which he conducted at Stambourne on May 27th, 1856, in commemoration of his grandfather's jubilee as pastor of the Congregational Church. Here, as usual, the chapel was thronged, people driving into Stambourne from the surrounding districts in hundreds.

Many stories might be told of the young preacher's unconventionality, which sometimes rather startled sleepy or careless congregations. At one place where he was preaching the people continually looked round as newcomers entered the chapel. "Now, friends," said Charles Haddon Spurgeon, when this rude behaviour had continued for some minutes, "as it is so very interesting to you to know who comes in and it disturbs me so very much for you to look round, I will, if you like, describe each one as he comes in, so that you may sit and look at me and keep up at least a show of decency." He then described a gentleman, a friend of his, who entered at that moment, as "a very respectable gentleman who has just taken his hat off," and so on. Needless to say, it was not found necessary to continue the descriptions of later arrivals. At Tring he preached in a little chapel, the minister of which only received fifteen shillings a week as stipend, and stood much in need of a suit of clothes. C. H. Spurgeon brought the service to a conclusion, and then said, "Now, dear friends, I have preached to you as well as I could, and you know that our Saviour said to His disciples, 'Freely ye have received, freely give.' I don't want anything from you for myself, but the minister of this chapel looks to me as though he would not object to a new suit of clothes." He pointed to old Mr. Thomas Olney, his deacon, at whose suggestion the visit to Tring had been paid, and said, "Father Olney, down there, I

am sure will start the collection with half-a-sovereign; I will gladly give the same amount; and if you will all help as much as you can our brother will soon have a new suit, and a good one too." The collection taken was more than sufficient to provide the clothes. After the service C. H. Spurgeon apologized to the minister for drawing attention to his worn clothes, but so far from being offended that worthy thanked the young preacher, adding, "Ever since I have been in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ my Master has always found me my livery." Probably it is unnecessary to state that when this story became known it appeared in the newspapers with many embellishments.

An experience that happened to the preacher when returning from one of these early preaching engagements out of London is worth recording. He was in a train on the Eastern Counties Railway—now the Great Eastern—when he suddenly discovered that his ticket had disappeared, and he was without money. A fellow-traveller learning this appeared to manifest some concern, but Charles Haddon Spurgeon declared that he was not at all troubled, "For," said he, "I have been on my Master's business and I am quite sure all will be well. I have had so many interpositions of Divine providence in small matters as well as in great ones that I feel as if, whatever happens to me, I am bound to fall on my feet like the man on the Manx penny." When the train reached Bishopsgate a collector entered and at once touched his hat to the minister's companion, who said, "All right, William." The man thereupon left the compartment without asking for any tickets. It transpired that the traveller was the general manager of the railway, and both he and C. H. Spurgeon regarded the incident as a proof

of God's watchful care over those who trust in Him for small matters as well as for great.

After fulfilling all his London engagements and taking these frequent journeys into the provinces, very little time was left to the young minister except for sleep. Nevertheless he thus early commenced that literary work which has made his name as an author rival that as a preacher. Charles Haddon Spurgeon's first printed effort was No. 1 of a short series of "Waterbeach Tracts," which appeared in 1853, and in the same year the *Baptist Reporter* published an account from his pen, signed C. H. S., of the conversation with the Maidstone clergymen which led him as a boy to search the Scriptures in connection with the subject of baptism. After he came to London, the young minister contributed some expository articles to another Baptist magazine, and then several of his sermons were published in James Paul's "Penny Pulpit." The sale of these was so considerable, and the demand increased so greatly that Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster proposed to publish a sermon by C. H. Spurgeon weekly, the series to be called "The New Park Street Pulpit." The young preacher gave his consent "with much fear and trembling," and in January, 1855, the first of that long series which is still appearing week by week was issued. In another place something will be said about the extraordinary sale of C. H. Spurgeon's sermons, extending over half a century, but from the first they enjoyed an immense circulation both singly and in volumes.

The little book, "Smooth Stones Taken from Ancient Brooks," in compiling which his *fiancée* helped him, has already been referred to, and another early venture, partly intended as an answer to the slanders and calumnies by which he was assailed, was a new edition of "The Baptist

Confession of Faith," with prefatory notes. One volume, "The Saint and his Saviour," containing 480 pages, Charles Haddon Spurgeon sold to a publisher for fifty pounds—a sum that seemed large to him at that time. But the success of the book must have put hundreds of pounds into the publisher's pocket, and as that gentleman never suggested that the writer should receive anything further for his share of the work, the young minister did not offer him another book. Thus it was that Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, the former of whom was a nephew of Dr. Rippon, and, as already stated, a leading deacon at New Park Street, came to be publishers for the great and popular divine, and the relations between them from the beginning to the end were of the most cordial and friendly character. It is interesting, in view of after events, to learn that just as many prophesied his utter failure as a preacher, and urged him to abandon that work altogether, so, in his early literary days C. H. Spurgeon was strongly advised to give up writing on the ground that he was not likely to gain any success in that field. That he persevered amid discouragement, and found time from his ministerial work to write at all, is characteristic of the man. Literary work was to him no light and pleasurable recreation for the filling up of spare moments. This is clear from his account of how "The Saint and his Saviour" was produced. "Never," he says, "was a book written amid more incessant toil. Only the fragments of time could be allotted to it, and intense mental and bodily exertions have often rendered me incapable of turning even those fragments to advantage. Writing is to me the work of a slave. It is a delight, a joy, a rapture to talk out my thoughts in words that flash upon the mind at the instant when they are required ; but it is poor drudgery."

to sit still and groan for thoughts and words without succeeding in obtaining them. Well may a man's books be called his 'works,' for if every man's mind were constituted as mine is it would be work indeed to produce a quarto volume. Nothing but a sense of duty has impelled me to finish this little book, which has been more than two years on hand. Yet have I at times so enjoyed the meditation which my writing has induced, that I would not discontinue the labour were it ten times more irksome; and, moreover, I have some hopes that it may yet be a pleasure to me to serve God with the pen as well as the lip." This was no vain hope, as the Spurgeon shelves in the Pastors' College Library, and the publishing house in Paternoster Buildings clearly prove.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SURREY GARDENS MUSIC HALL.

WE now come to what Charles Haddon Spurgeon described as the greatest ordeal of his life. Towards the end of 1856 the Exeter Hall directors intimated to the authorities of New Park Street Chapel, that they found themselves unable to let their building continuously to one congregation, for fear that it should thereby acquire a denominational character. This appeared quite fair to the deacons, but it nevertheless put them in a dilemma, for the congregations continued to be of enormous size; while hundreds, and frequently thousands, had to be refused admission to the services owing to lack of accommodation. A fund had recently been started for the erection of a new chapel, suited to the needs of the congregation, but it would be a long time before a sufficient sum was forthcoming to meet the cost of building operations, and even then a considerable period must elapse before the structure would be ready for use. For a time the church authorities felt helpless, but the difficulty was met in a characteristically daring manner. The proprietors of the Royal Surrey Gardens, on the south side of the river, had just added to the attractions of that resort by erecting a magnificent music-hall, capable of accommodating ten thousand persons, and one of the deacons, Mr. Moore, proposed that this building might be rented for the Sunday evening services. The decision, of

course, lay with the young pastor, and although he shrank from preaching in a place of such vast size, he nevertheless agreed to the proposal. A music-hall in those days was very different from its namesake of to-day; the entertainments consisted only of popular concerts, but the employment of such a building for Gospel services was unheard of. However, the young minister and Mr. William Olney went to view the place, and although it seemed indeed a venturesome experiment to attempt to preach there, on account of both the size and the associations of the hall, yet their faith in God and the purity of their motives induced them to believe that blessing and success would result. Several of the church members seriously objected to using, for sacred purposes, what they described as "the devil's house," but the young preacher was not to be daunted, and while he urged these fearful ones to stop away rather than violate their consciences, he begged them not to discourage others from coming under the sound of the Gospel. "We did not go to the music-hall because we thought it was a good thing to worship in a building usually devoted to amusement," said C. H. Spurgeon afterwards, "but because we had no other place to go to." So far as location was concerned the building offered every advantage, for it lay at no great distance from New Park Street Chapel, and was easily reached from all parts of South London.

The hall was engaged for four Sundays, commencing with October 19, 1856, and much prayer having been offered that rich spiritual blessings might result from the services, the deacons and church members looked forward to the opening meeting with hopeful expectations. But as the day grew near, C. H. Spurgeon seems to have had inexplicable forebodings of coming disaster. "I felt over-



The Royal Surrey Gardens Music Hall—the scene of the great disaster on October 19, 1856.

weighted," he says, "with a sense of responsibility, and filled with a mysterious premonition of some great trial shortly to befall me." This feeling had not lessened but rather increased when Sunday, October 19, arrived, and in his morning sermon at New Park Street Chapel he gave utterance to statements which, in the light of after events, appear little short of prophetic. "What," asked the preacher, "does God say to the Church? 'You have proved Me aforetime, you have attempted great things; though some of you were faint-hearted and said, "We should not have ventured," others of you had faith and proved Me. I say again, "Prove me now."' See what God can do *just when a cloud is falling on the head of him whom God has raised up to preach to you. Go and prove Him now.*"

As the evening of the memorable day drew near, people began to gather at the gardens, and long before the time of service every thoroughfare converging upon the noted pleasure-grounds was thronged. The doors were opened at an early hour, and within a very short space of time the vast hall was filled as it had never been filled before. Scarcely could standing room for another person have been found, and it was estimated that between ten and twelve thousand people were present. But outside a crowd equally large, and, according to some eye-witnesses, even larger, vainly sought admission. Not only were the streets all round the gardens still thronged, but the road leading from the entrance of the grounds up to the hall doors was filled with a solid mass of humanity. Only with difficulty could the preacher gain admission through a private entrance, and it is not surprising that the sight of the unprecedented crowds should almost have unnerved him. The responsibility of his position was brought home with ten-fold force, and for a time faintness overtook

him. Then when he had rallied, friends conducted him to the pulpit, which was placed at the end of the auditorium, where the orchestra usually sat.

Considering the class of people of which the congregation was largely composed, the class which never entered a place of worship, the sight inside the music-hall was indeed a remarkable one. There was naturally some excitement as visitors entered and hurried to secure seats, but once the place was filled, the congregation became as tranquil as that inside the average church or chapel. Dr. Campbell, who wrote a vivid description of the events of the evening in his journal, *The British Banner*, declared that even the scene of commotion witnessed while the people entered would have borne a very favourable comparison with the huge religious anniversary meetings at Exeter Hall.

The building being packed, C. H. Spurgeon thought it wise to begin the service ten minutes before time, which he did by making a few remarks appropriate to the occasion. His voice was wonderful. It filled the whole place, so that even in the remotest corners every word could be heard plainly, and this without apparent effort and without harsh shouting. A brief prayer was offered, and then followed the singing of a hymn—an event never forgotten by those who were present, the vast multitude joining together heartily, so that the hymn rolled out as the voice of many waters. After the reading of a passage of Scripture, with running commentary, the general prayer was commenced. And now happened what, if caused deliberately, as it seems impossible to disbelieve, was one of the most dastardly deeds recorded in recent religious history. The preacher was pleading earnestly with God for the salvation of souls, and a remarkable hush was upon the vast assembly.

Suddenly among the dense mass of people sitting and standing round the main entrance of the hall, cries of "Fire! Fire!" were raised. At the same instant a little distance away, and presumably in the galleries, a number of voices shouted, "The galleries are giving way," and at still another place a cry of well-feigned alarm was raised, "The building is falling!" Panic at once ensued in that part of the hall. The people rushed for the doors and staircases, and a terrible scene of disaster was witnessed. Men and women tore the clothes from one another's backs in their mad efforts to escape from the building, and those who were too weak to save themselves from falling were trodden upon in the stampede. Wild cries and shrieks rent the air, adding to the terror and confusion, and many, unable to get to the doors, climbed over the balustrades and dropped from the galleries, injuring themselves and those on whom they fell. On the staircases the scene was even more dreadful than in the hall, for large numbers were borne aloft and precipitated over the banisters, and in one place the balustrade itself gave way. The panic among the people did not cease when they reached the gardens, for a rush was made to the gates leading into the street, and here another disaster occurred. The gates had been locked to prevent the disappointed crowds outside from entering the grounds, and owing to the crush on both sides, they could not now be opened. The unreasoning terror of the people knew no bounds. Even if the hall had been a mass of leaping flames, they were safe in the extremity of the gardens, but their mad fight for life continued, and men, women and children climbed or were pushed over the railings, many being crushed and injured.

To make matters worse in the hall, it appears that as

the terror-stricken fugitives rushed out, the people who had been waiting outside ran in, some not knowing an accident had happened, to get places, and others who had heard the cries, to discover what really had occurred. This seems almost incredible, for one would think the crush of fugitives at all the doors would be so great as to bar effectually the ingress of new comers. The wild panic did not extend to every part of the hall, however, and possibly the people from outside poured in at the opposite end to that at which the alarm had been given.

What was the effect upon the preacher of this sudden and awful interruption of his prayer for blessing on the people? At first he was surprised by the commotion, for the earliest cries of alarm seem not to have been heard in his end of the hall. Then when he saw the rush to the doors and heard the word "Fire!" he tried to stop the panic and calm the people's fears by calling to them in a stentorian voice that there was no fire and no cause for fear: the alarm had probably been raised by thieves and pickpockets. The happenings on the staircases, where people were being trampled to death, were of course quite unknown to the young minister and those near him, and when after quietness had been to some extent restored, cries of "Preach! preach!" were raised repeatedly, he made a brief statement referring to the false alarm. "My friends," he said, "you bid me preach, but what shall I preach about? I am ready to do all I can; but, in the midst of all this confusion, what shall be my subject? May God's Holy Spirit give me a theme suited to this solemn occasion! My friends, there is a terrible day coming, when the terror and alarm of this evening shall be as nothing. That will be a time when the thunder and lightning and blackest darkness shall have their fullest power, when the

earth shall reel to and fro beneath us, and when the arches of the solid heavens shall totter to their centre. The day is coming when the clouds shall reveal their wonders and portents, and Christ shall sit upon those clouds in glory, and shall call you to judgment. Many have gone away to-night, in the midst of this terrible confusion, and so shall it be on that great day. I can, however, believe that the results of that time of testing will show that there will be many—not a less proportion than those who now remain to those who have left—who will stand the ordeal even of that day. The alarm which has just arisen has been produced, in some measure, by that instinct which teaches us to seek self-preservation; but in the more numerous of the cases, it is not so much the dread of death which has influenced them, as ‘the dread of something after death,—the undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller returns.’ ’Tis conscience that has made cowards of them. Many were afraid to stop here, because they thought, if they stayed, they might die, and then they would be damned. They were aware—and many of you are aware—that, if you were hurried before your Maker to-night, you would be brought there unshriven, unpardoned, and condemned. But what are your fears now to what they will be on that terrible day of reckoning of the Almighty, when the heavens shall shrink above you, and hell shall open her mouth beneath you? But know you not, my friends, that grace, sovereign grace, can yet save you? Have you never heard the welcome news that Jesus came into the world to save sinners? Even if you are the chief of sinners, believe that Christ died for you, and you shall be saved. Do you not know that you are lost and ruined, and that none but Jesus can do helpless sinners good? You are sick and diseased, but Jesus can heal you; and He will if you only

trust Him. I thought of preaching to-night from the third chapter of Proverbs, at the 33rd verse: 'The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but He blesseth the habitation of the just.' I feel that, after what has happened, I cannot preach as I could have wished to do; I fear that you will have another alarm, and I would rather



A photograph of C. H. Spurgeon taken about the time of the Surrey Gardens Music Hall disaster.

that some of you would seek to retire gradually, in order that no harm may be done to anyone."

At this point a fresh disturbance broke out, but during the singing of a hymn quiet was again restored, and the preacher essayed to continue his address. It cannot be too

much emphasized that at this point C. H. Spurgeon and the friends about him were quite unconscious that anyone had been injured, much less that there had been loss of life. It was supposed that nothing worse had happened than an alarm causing fear and a confused exit. Gradually, however, there were whispers that some accidents had occurred, though not in the character of a real disaster, and so when for a third time disorder broke out, the preacher closed the terrible service by saying: "My brain is in a whirl, and I scarcely know where I am, so great are my apprehensions that many persons must have been injured by rushing out. I would rather that you retired gradually, and may God Almighty dismiss you with His blessing and carry you in safety to your homes! If our friends will go out by the central doors, we will sing while they go, and pray that some good may, after all, come out of this great evil. Do not, however, be in a hurry. Let those nearest the doors go first." After the hymn the Benediction was pronounced, and then overcome by the terrible strain, the young preacher was led from the pulpit apparently insensible. He heard, however, whispers that loss of life had occurred. Thereupon, with reason almost shattered, and in such a state of collapse, that many thought he was dead, he was borne to his home where his wife lay still an invalid, only a month having elapsed since the birth of her twin-boys.

At the scene of the disaster, when at last it was possible to get a clear idea of the extent of the evil, seven persons were found to have been killed and a large number more or less seriously injured, twenty-eight of whom had to be removed to the hospitals. The garments collected in the hall on the morning after the disaster were so numerous that the local police-station could scarcely find room to store them.

It now becomes necessary to examine the evidence with a view of discovering, if possible, the causes that led to this terrible disaster. Three theories present themselves: first that there was one of those senseless panics that occur so mysteriously from time to time when large numbers of people are gathered together; secondly, that the alarm was given by thieves and pickpockets with the intention of creating a scene of confusion in which they could ply their nefarious business the more easily; and thirdly, that for some reason known to themselves a number of evil-disposed persons had organised a conspiracy to break up the meeting at all costs, and to ruin for ever the popularity of the young preacher. This last theory, terrible as it is, seems the only reasonable solution of the mystery. That the trouble did not arise from a spontaneous and inexplicable panic all those qualified to speak with authority—level-headed persons present in different parts of the hall—seem agreed. The second suggestion, that the earliest cries of alarm came from pickpockets, was advanced, but the reasons against accepting this theory appear overwhelming. Let us carefully examine the testimony of eye-witnesses. In the first place all are unanimous that the cries of—"Fire!" "The gallery is giving way!" "The building is falling!" given from different places, were only signals, and that there was a distinct conspiracy among a large number of people to cause a panic in the crowds adjacent to the doors. Dr. Campbell, editor of *The British Banner*, who was taking careful notice from the first of everything that happened in the hall, with a view of writing a detailed report, is very clear on this point. "To say it began with one or two cries of 'Fire!'" he writes, "as we view the matter, is wholly to misrepresent it. For our own part we heard no

such cries. Such, however, there doubtless were; but they were only signals. The thing bore the impress of a plan to which some hundreds of persons at least appeared to be parties. The mere cry of 'Fire!' would have produced more or less of a general commotion extending to all parts of the house, which was but slightly moved; whereas the indescribable and terrible outbreak was limited to a large portion of people in a given locality surrounding the great entrance. The outbreak could be likened to nothing but the sudden bursting forth of an immense body of trained singers or a vast reservoir of water, whose sluices were opened or whose banks had given way. It is impossible that any cries of two or three individuals could ever have produced so sudden, so simultaneous, and so sustained a display of fear, horror and consternation. We are strongly impressed with the conviction that the thing from the adroitness of the performance must have been well practised beforehand. So far as we could judge from appearances the parties, or a portion of them, who led in the terrific uproar, also led in the rush, which appeared as an especial part of their infernal arrangement."

Mr. Moore, the deacon already referred to, declared that "with reference to the origin of the alarm, there is no doubt that it originated from wicked designing men," and this was the opinion of the whole of the deacons who recorded the fact in the church book when chronicling the terrible events of the evening of October 19th, 1856.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon himself, always loth to believe evil of anyone, expressed the hope soon after the disaster that there was no concerted wickedness at the bottom of the affair. But he was compelled to change his opinion a year later when he had heard all the evidence that could be gathered, and he then declared emphatically

that the calamity had occurred "by the malicious act of wicked men."

Now who were these conspirators? Were they pick-pockets desirous of reaping a rich harvest, or mere roisterers, or were they men who had a deeper motive for their dark deed? Justice compels us to believe that they belonged to neither of the former classes named. That an attempt might be made to create confusion from motives of mischief or trifling gain was very probable, but neither brawlers nor thieves would persist in repeating their offence again and again when the shrieks of the dying were rending the air, and the awful results of the alarm were manifest on every hand. The unlooked-for outcome of events would have appalled them. Further, although there were thefts both inside and outside the hall, we are unable to learn that these exceeded in number the pilferings that invariably take place in any great assemblage of excited persons. A police officer, Superintendent Lund, who was present and witnessed the whole course of events, was emphatically of opinion that the panic was not started by thieves for their own purposes, but by opponents of C. H. Spurgeon, who had repaired to the hall for the express purpose of disturbing the meeting. Across the hall, he distinctly saw several persons rise and shout "Fire!" but these people occupied positions far too prominent for "swell-mobsmen," who invariably keep in the background and round the doorways.

We are left then to the decision that the disaster was deliberately brought about by enemies of the preacher and his work. As Dr. Campbell and others have stated, a large number of conspirators must have been concerned, and so thoroughly and persistently was the dastardly work carried out, that it is clear not only was the plot well organised, but

the men engaged must have practised their parts thoroughly. The decision to break up the meeting was evidently to be carried out at all costs, for in that part of the hall where the disturbance first occurred, even after it became known that many people had been killed and injured and quiet was restored, the mysterious cries again went up, renewing the confusion. A second time perfect order was restored, but the miscreants were persistent, and the shouting ceased only when the meeting was brought to a close. From the nature of events, however, nothing could be distinctly proved, and when an inquest was held on the bodies of the victims, a verdict of accidental death was returned. A fund was immediately raised for the sufferers, and the members of the New Park Street Church did everything in their power to allay the distress. A reward of fifty pounds was offered by the deacons for information which would lead to the discovery of the person or persons who gave the first false alarms, but the perpetrators of the terrible crime were never found.

The calamity was eagerly seized upon by writers of the baser sort, who attempted to vilify the young preacher's character by throwing on him the blame for all that had happened. He had only taken the great hall out of vanity, they said, and to his charge must be laid the responsibility for the deaths and injuries that had resulted. Some of the most eminent of London journals joined in the ferocious attack, and what had occurred was deliberately misrepresented to the detriment of the young preacher then lying prostrate at the house of a friend, with his wife an invalid, and his twin children scarcely a month old. The *Daily Telegraph* was most bitter of all.

"Mr. Spurgeon," it said, "is a preacher who hurls damnation at the heads of his sinful hearers. Some men there are

who, taking their precepts from Holy Writ, would beckon erring souls to a rightful path with fair words and gentle admonition; Mr. Spurgeon would take them by the nose, and bully them into religion. Let us set up a barrier to the encroachments and blasphemies of men like Spurgeon, saying to them, ‘Thus far shalt thou come, but no further;’ let us devise some powerful means which shall tell to the thousands who now stand in need of enlightenment,—This man, in his own opinion, is a righteous Christian; but in ours, nothing more than a ranting charlatan. We are neither strait-laced nor Sabbatarian in our sentiments; but we would keep apart, widely apart, the theatre and the church;—above all, we would place in the hand of every right-thinking man, a whip to scourge from society the authors of such vile blasphemies as, on Sunday night, above the cries of the dead and the dying, and louder than the wails of misery from the maimed and suffering, resounded from the mouth of Spurgeon in the music-hall of the Surrey Gardens. And lastly, when the mangled corpses had been carried away from the unhallowed and disgraceful scene—when husbands were seeking their wives, and children their mothers in extreme agony and despair—the chink of the money as it fell into the collection-boxes grated harshly, miserably on the ears of those who, we sincerely hope, have by this time conceived for Mr. Spurgeon and his rantings the profoundest contempt.”

Scarcely less bitter was the *Daily News*, which declared: “The crowd had been assembled to collect a subscription towards the erection of such a mammoth chapel (the proposed Tabernacle), and Mr. Spurgeon and his friends were unwilling that the opportunity should be lost. Therefore his untimely reminder; therefore Mr. Spurgeon’s exclamation to the panic-stricken fugitives that

they were more afraid of temporal than eternal death; therefore the indecent rattling of money-boxes in their ears. We might go further and remark on the callous manner in which Mr. Spurgeon and his friends left the meeting, without one attempt to aid or soothe the sufferers; but we are willing to make allowance for the bewilderment which such a spectacle was calculated to produce."

As many pointed out at the time, the statements referred to were either wholly fabrications or deliberate misrepresentations of the truth. The people were not gathered for the purpose of raising a subscription, the money-boxes were never brought forward, and C. H. Spurgeon's brief remarks had been made after repeated calls to preach when he was quite unaware that anybody had been hurt. Further, everything possible had been done to succour the injured and comfort the distressed, and it is safe to say that of nobody but a minister of the Gospel would such libels have been published for fear of an action-at-law. In justice to the newspapers concerned, however, it must be stated that they afterwards became among the most generous admirers of the great preacher.

At the end of the week the *Saturday Review* came out with a long article in which it classed Charles Haddon Spurgeon with Joe Smith (the Mormon Prophet), and his preaching with spirit-rapping from the point of view of novelty. "His success," said the writer, "is simply of the vulgarest and most commonplace type. Given a person of some natural talents with matchless powers of acquired impudence, and a daring defiance of good taste and often of common decency—and he will always produce an effect. Anybody who will give himself out as some great one, will find followers enough to accept his leadership. A charlatan will never be without dupes.

The crowds who flock to the various Spurgeon conventicles are only of the class who would follow the bottle conjuror, or anyone who chose to advertise that he would fly from the Monument to the dome of St. Paul's."

The article then referred to the preacher as "a very ordinary impostor," and suggested that as a counter-attraction to his preaching, Sunday bands should be set playing so that there might be "a chance of thinning the crowds." The innovation, it was explained, would "only be the substitution of one set of amusements for another." The hiring of places of public amusement for Sunday preaching was a painful novelty. It looked as if religion were at its last shift, and so far from the move being a wrestling with Satan in his strongholds, it was, said the writer, "a cowardly truce and alliance with the world." "Why," it was asked, "should Mr. Spurgeon be content with his present achievement? The Surrey Gardens affair was a great *coup*. The deplorable accident, in which seven people lost their lives, and scores were maimed, mutilated, or otherwise cruelly injured, Mr. Spurgeon only considers as an additional intervention of Providence in his favour. 'This event will, I trust, teach us the necessity of'—being sober, rational, and decent?—No;—'having a building of our own.' Preach another crowd into a frenzy and terror,—kill and smash a dozen or two more,—and then the speculation will have succeeded. Mr. Spurgeon, improving the occasion, is said to have remarked that 'this gathering had aroused Satan, and he would not allow the service to go on without endeavouring to interrupt it.' We do not profess that familiarity with Satan and his doings which is enjoyed by Mr. Spurgeon. Doubtless, he possesses more of Satan's confidence, and more knowledge of his character, than ordinary men; at least, with our estimate of the power of

evil, we should judge so from this mode of dealing with the deplorable result of his vanity and cupidity. We certainly believe that Satan was busy enough on Sunday evening last. The reporters tell us that the publicans and pickpockets 'reaped a rich harvest' from the occasion. These are, at any rate, new fruits of a gospel ministry, and strange triumphs of the cross. Expostulation and advice are thrown away upon one who can act as Mr. Spurgeon is reported to have acted in the presence of these unusual seals to his ministry. Yet it is always a public duty to show up selfishness and vanity; and we can only hope that it will prove in this instance to be a public benefit also."

Several journals, however, notably the *Morning Advertiser*, *The British Banner*, and *The Freeman* defended the young preacher, and maintained that he had done right in taking the Music Hall for his services, and had inaugurated the movement with no unworthy motives of ambition or vanity.

At the time of their appearance, C. H. Spurgeon knew nothing of the dastardly attacks that were being made upon him in the public Press. On the night of the disaster, when taken to his home, his whole appearance had changed; he was nothing but a wreck of his former self, and for a time it was feared that the agony of mind he suffered would cause him to lose his reason. The young preacher, with his wife, went to stay with a friend at Croydon in the hope that the quiet and the change would aid in restoring his mental equilibrium, but restless and anguished he used to walk about the garden, a dulness in his eyes, such as had never before dimmed them. The experiences of his mind at and after the calamity he has described in "The Saint and his Saviour."

"Strong amid danger, I battled against the storm; nor

did my spirit yield to the overwhelming pressure while my courage could reassure the wavering, or confirm the bold ; but when, like a whirlwind, the destruction was overpast, when the whole of its devastation was visible to my eye, who can conceive the anguish of my sad spirit ? I refused to be comforted ; tears were my meat by day, and dreams my terror by night. I felt as I had never felt before. ‘ My thoughts were all a case of knives,’ cutting my heart in pieces, until a kind of stupor of grief ministered a mournful medicine to me. I could have truly said, ‘ I am not mad, but surely I have had enough to madden me, if I should indulge in meditation on it.’ I sought and found a solitude which seemed congenial to me. I could tell my griefs to the flowers, and the dews could weep with me. Here my mind lay, like a wreck upon the sand, incapable of its usual motion. I was in a strange land, and a stranger in it. My Bible, once my daily food, was but a hand to lift the sluices of my woe. Prayer yielded no balm to me ; in fact, my soul was like an infant’s soul, and I could not rise to the dignity of supplication. ‘ Broken in pieces all asunder,’ my thoughts, which had been to me a cup of delights, were like pieces of broken glass, the piercing and cutting miseries of my pilgrimage.”

But hope was about to dawn. One day, walking in the Croydon garden with his wife, he suddenly stopped, and turning to her with the old light once again in his eyes, he exclaimed : “ Dearest, how foolish I have been ! Why ! what does it matter what becomes of me if the Lord shall but be glorified ? ” Then he repeated the words : “ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that

every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," adding, "If Christ be exalted, let Him do as He pleases with me; my one prayer shall be that I may die to self and live wholly for Him and for His honour."

This sudden access of light and joy into his anguished soul, where for days all had been darkness and despair, was almost like a second experience of conversion.

"Like a flash of lightning from the sky," he says, "my soul returned unto me. The burning lava of my brain cooled in an instant. The throbbings of my brow were still; the cool wind of comfort fanned my cheek, which had been scorched in the furnace. I was free, the iron fetter was broken in pieces, my prison door was open, and I leaped for joy of heart. On wings of a dove, my spirit mounted to the stars—yea, beyond them. Whither did it wing its flight, and where did it sing its song of gratitude? It was at the feet of Jesus, whose Name had charmed its fears, and placed an end to its mourning. The Name—the precious Name of Jesus, was like Ithuriel's spear, bringing back my soul to its own right and happy state. I was a man again, and what is more, a believer. The garden in which I stood became an Eden to me, and the spot was then most solemnly consecrated in my restored consciousness. Happy hour! Thrice-blessed Lord, who thus in an instant delivered me from the rock of my despair, and slew the vulture of my grief! Before I told to others the glad news of my recovery, my heart was melodious with song, and my tongue endeavoured tardily to express the music. Then did I give to my Well-beloved a song touching my Well-beloved; and, oh! with what rapture did my soul flash forth its praises! But all—all were to the honour of Him, the First and the Last, the Brother born for adversity, the

Deliverer of the captive, the Breaker of my fetters, the Restorer of my soul. Then did I cast my burden upon the Lord ; I left my ashes, and arrayed myself in the garments of praise, while He anointed me with fresh oil. I could have riven the very firmament to get at Him, to cast myself at His feet, and lie there bathed in the tears of joy and love. Never since the day of my conversion had I known so much of His infinite excellence, never had my spirit leaped with such unutterable delight. Scorn, tumult, and woe seemed less than nothing for His sake. I girded up my loins to run before His chariot, I began to shout forth His glory, for my soul was absorbed in the one idea of His glorious exaltation and Divine compassion."

The terrible events of that fatal Sunday evening remained with the preacher to the end of his days as a vivid memory. He could never hear the text from which he had intended to preach (Proverbs iii. 33) without turning pale and becoming deeply moved, and any suggestion of confusion at the crowded gatherings which he afterwards addressed would almost unman him. The Rev. R. Shindler tells how a quarter of a century after the music-hall disaster, when C. H. Spurgeon preached in the largest available hall in Portsmouth, there was some confusion as the preacher was passing on to the platform, and in a moment the scene at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall was recalled vividly to his mind, completely unnerving him. He stood in the passage leaning his head upon his hand, and although later he preached well to the large congregation, which included Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, he could not completely control his agitation at the terrible memories which the noise had conjured up.

The narrowest escape of a repetition of the disaster which the preacher experienced was, less than two years later, when

he preached at Halifax to six thousand persons in a large wooden structure erected for the purpose. Three services were held that day, and as the people were dispersing after the evening meeting, a portion of the gallery floor gave way. Fortunately the majority of the congregation had left, and of the persons who fell with the woodwork, only two were severely injured, sustaining broken legs.

"Now, had this happened any earlier," said C. H. Spurgeon, recording the providence in one of his sermons at the Surrey Music Hall, "not only must many more have been injured, but there are a thousand chances to one, as we say, that a panic must necessarily have ensued similar to that which we still remember, and deplore as having occurred in this place. Had such a thing happened, and had I been the unhappy preacher on the occasion, I feel certain that I should never have been able to occupy the pulpit again. Such was the effect of the first calamity, that I marvel that I ever survived. No human tongue can possibly tell what I experienced. The Lord, however, graciously preserved us; the fewness of the people in the gallery prevented any such catastrophe, and thus a most fearful accident was averted. But there is a more marvellous providence still to record. Overloaded by the immense weight of snow which fell upon it, and beaten by a heavy wind, the entire structure fell with an enormous crash three hours after we had left it, splitting the huge timbers into shivers, and rendering very much of the material utterly useless for any future building. Now mark this,—had the snow begun three hours earlier, the hall must have fallen upon us, and how few of us would have escaped, we cannot guess. But mark another thing. All day long it thawed so fast, that the snow as it fell seemed to leave a mass, not of white snow, but of snow and water together. This ran through

the roof upon us, to our considerable annoyance, and I was almost ready to complain that we had hard dealings from God's providence. But if it had been a frost, instead of a thaw, you can easily perceive that the place must have fallen several hours before it did ; and then your minister, and the greater part of his congregation, would probably have been in the other world. Some there may be who deny providence altogether. I cannot conceive that there were any witnesses of that scene who could have done so. This I know, if I had been an unbeliever to this day in the doctrine of the supervision and wise care of God, I must have been a believer in it at this hour. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together ! He hath been very gracious unto us, and remembered us for good."

Such is the story of the Surrey Gardens Music Hall disaster, as completely as it can be told now. It is doubtful if any other preacher could have survived the terrible event. A man of less dogged spirit and of weaker faith in God must have succumbed under the strain, and become a mental and physical wreck, whilst his popularity, even had he survived, would have entirely departed. But such was not the case with Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He was sustained in his terrible trial, was enabled to resume his preaching with unimpaired powers, and within a short time delivered the Gospel message to huge congregations in the very building where the disaster had occurred. Many of those who had been injured afterwards joined the young pastor's church. Surely in all this is to be seen proof that the work was of God, for had it been of men, it must undoubtedly have "come to nought."

CHAPTER XVI.

LATER SERVICES AT THE MUSIC HALL: FAST DAY AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

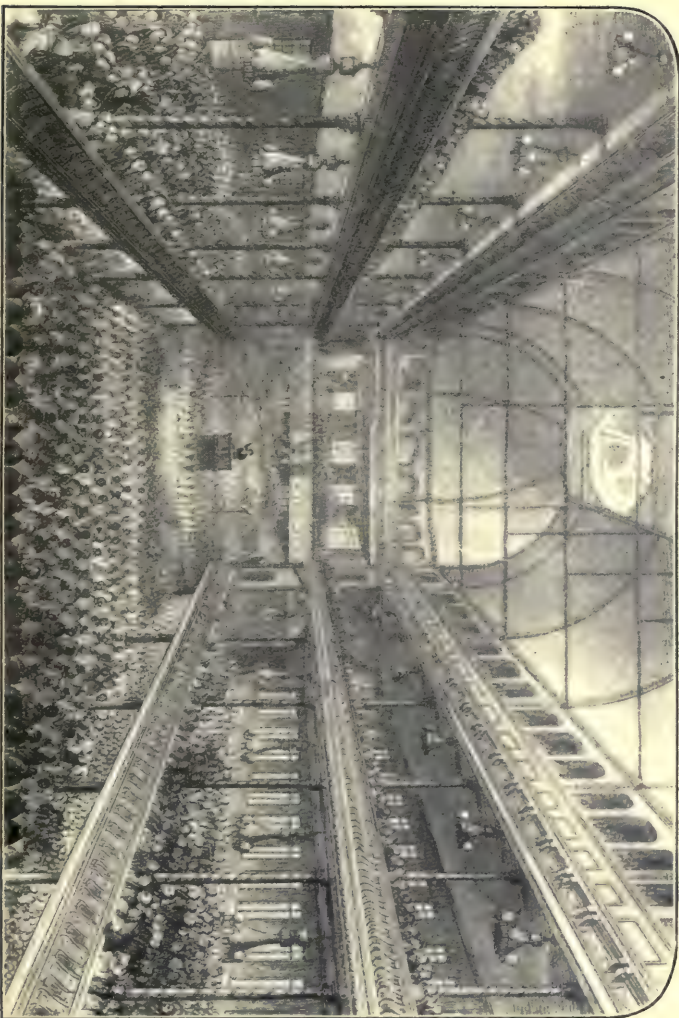
A FORTNIGHT after the disaster, the young preacher was sufficiently recovered to occupy his pulpit at New Park Street, but he bore sad traces of the terrible ordeal through which he had passed. The service was from the very nature of the circumstances a sad one. Although no single member of the church had lost his or her life, it could not but be remembered that many people in the neighbourhood had suffered bereavement, and that a large proportion of the injured still lay suffering in the hospitals. For these the pastor prayed most earnestly that they might be comforted and blessed with every blessing that they needed. Then at the opening of his discourse he briefly referred to what had happened, declaring, however, that he could then say but little about the matter. "I could not," he explained, "preach to you upon a subject that should be in the least allied to it; I should be obliged to be silent if I should bring to my remembrance that terrific scene in the midst of which it was my solemn lot to stand." He went on to speak of those who had caused the tragedy, expressing the hope that God would forgive them. "They have my forgiveness from the depths of my soul. It shall not stop us, however; we are not in the least degree daunted by it. I shall preach there again yet; aye, and God will give us souls there, and Satan's empire shall tremble more than ever.

God is with us ; who is he that shall be against us ? ” The text of the brief address which followed was the one that had brought such comfort to the preacher’s soul in the midst of darkness and distress : “ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Both at that time and ever afterwards C. H. Spurgeon strongly maintained that such disasters were not to be viewed in the light of Divine judgments upon sinners of an exceptionally deep dye, as some declared or seemed inclined to think. The fact that devout Christians and unconscious infants oftentimes perished in accidents, clearly disproved such a thought, he believed. Nor was he prepared, like some, to accept the disaster as a sign of God’s disapproval. He had no faith in omens, and so, as soon as possible, another attempt was made to conduct Gospel services in the Music Hall, this time with remarkable success. But it was decided that the preaching there should take place in the mornings, so that daylight might aid in preventing further deeds of darkness, and although that time of the day is unfavourable for large congregations, the people turned out in thousands from the first, and the hall was filled Sunday after Sunday for a period of over three years. The first morning service was held on November 23rd, 1856, and the last on December 11th, 1859, and during that time thousands of conversions took place, which bore the test of time, continual additions were made to the church, and all the various enterprises which afterwards emanated from the Metropolitan Tabernacle owed their prosperity in a large degree to the advance made by the church during the

period of the Music Hall services. The effort was initiated for the purpose of reaching those people who never attended a place of worship, and that it was successful in this object was proved by the fact that before the commencement of each service it was usual for large numbers of the visitors to spend the time in reading newspapers. Such were the people, hundreds of whom afterwards became earnest Christians and diligent workers in the Lord's vineyard. What the Church at large and the nation owe to C. H. Spurgeon's daring innovation in preaching at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall cannot be fully estimated. It led the way for those wonderful services which have for years past been continuously conducted in theatres and other places of amusement, thereby carrying the Gospel to thousands who would never have entered a church or chapel, and the great evangelistic services commenced in Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral in 1858, at which thousands of men and women of the artisan class were regularly present, with splendid results, were the direct outcome of the religious movement inaugurated at the Music Hall.

A point upon which Charles Haddon Spurgeon always laid the greatest stress was that the preaching should be of such a character that the simplest could follow it. "I determined," he says, "that whether my hearers would receive the Gospel or reject it, they should at least understand it, and therefore I preached it in plain, homely Saxon that a child could comprehend, and with all the earnestness of which I was capable." But although the preaching was thus plain, it proved as acceptable to the classes as to the masses. Many distinguished and learned men and women were delighted with the sermons of the gifted young divine, and among those who at different times sat



Charles Haddon Spurgeon preaching in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall.

under his ministry at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall were one of her late Majesty's Prime Ministers, Lord John Russell, Lord Stanley of Alderley, Lord Campbell (the Lord Chief Justice of England), Dukes, Duchesses, and many other peers and peeresses, Lady Peel, Sir Richard Mayne (Chief Commissioner of Metropolitan Police), Dr. Livingstone, and John Ruskin, the last named being a very regular attendant. Lord Campbell remarked to the Commissioner of Police at the close of one service, "He is doing great good, sir,—great good," and the *Sun* newspaper, commenting on this, declared that London could find room for twenty such preachers; "they are just what the populace needs." From the West End of London on Sunday mornings a stream of carriages was always to be seen conveying fashionable occupants to the Surrey Gardens—a fact which in itself proved the wisdom of the young pastor's innovation, for few, if any, of these people would ever have dreamt of entering a dissenting chapel. On one occasion his huge congregation included the Marquis of Lansdowne, Baron Bramwell, and thirty Members of Parliament.

Of course there were many critics, but some at least of these helped the preacher. One anonymous correspondent used to send to C. H. Spurgeon weekly a list of the mispronunciations and other slips of speech which he had made in the previous Sunday's sermon. "Concerning some of his criticisms," says the preacher, "he was himself in error; but for the most part he was right, and his remarks enabled me to perceive many mistakes, and to avoid them in the future. I looked for his weekly memoranda with much interest, and I trust I am all the better for them. If I repeated a sentence which I had used two or three Sundays before, he would write, 'See the same expression in such-and-such a sermon,' mentioning the number and page. He

remarked on one occasion that I too often quoted the line,—

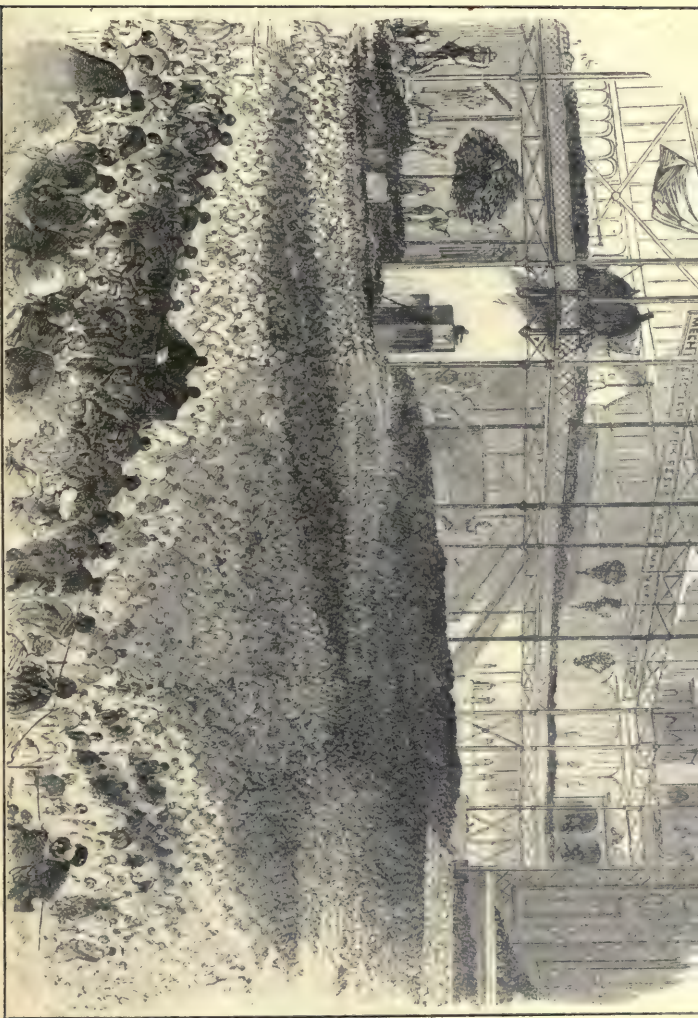
‘Nothing in my hand I bring,—

and he added, ‘we are sufficiently informed of the vacuity of your hand.’ He demanded my authority for calling a man *covechus*; and so on. Possibly some young men might have been discouraged, if not irritated, by such severe criticisms, but they would have been very foolish, for, in resenting such correction, they would have been throwing away a valuable aid to progress.”

A remarkable feature of C. H. Spurgeon’s preaching at this time was that he oftentimes felt impelled, he knew not why, to point at a certain part of the hall and make a remark, without having any idea that what he said was right, except that he believed he was moved by the Spirit to say it. “I have known many instances,” he says, “in which the thoughts of men have been revealed from the pulpit. I have sometimes seen persons nudge their neighbours with their elbow because they had got a smart hit, and they have been heard to say when they were going out, ‘The preacher told us just what we said to one another when we went in at the door.’” Perhaps the most striking instance of this was in the case of a shoemaker who, accustomed to engage in Sunday trading, yet went one morning out of curiosity to hear the popular preacher. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who knew nothing whatever of such a man being present, suddenly felt led to point at the very place where the tradesman sat, and exclaimed, “There is a man sitting there who is a shoemaker; he keeps his shop open on Sundays; it was open last Sabbath morning; he took ninepence, and there was fourpence profit out of it; his soul is sold to Satan for fourpence!” But the astonishing point is that every word was literally true, and the shoemaker

returned home greatly perturbed. He could not think how the preacher should know the facts he had mentioned, and then it struck him that God had spoken to his soul by what was nothing less than an interposition. He shut up his shop the following Sunday, but was afraid for a time to go to hear the preacher. At last he went, and the result was his conversion. The facts, thoroughly authenticated, became known through a City missionary, and C. H. Spurgeon himself has confirmed the story.

So remarkable was the spiritual work done in the Music Hall, and so numerous were the conversions, that after a time the character of the congregation completely changed, and from being a crowd of careless hearers gathered out of curiosity, it became, in great part, an assemblage of earnest Christians. Charles Haddon Spurgeon thereupon changed the character of his preaching, and many of the later sermons are expository and doctrinal. Such a result has, probably, never been achieved at any other time in connection with Gospel services in a secular building. The congregations after the night of the terrible disaster were always most orderly and attentive. Any thought of frivolity or mischief seemed to vanish in the presence of the man and his message. Once some young men entered the hall, and out of bravado retained their hats after the service had begun. Charles Haddon Spurgeon's method of dealing with them was such as would have occurred to no other preacher, and it was at a time like this that his vein of humour stood him in good stead. In the middle of the opening hymn he told the congregation that a short time before he had visited a Jewish synagogue, and in accordance with the custom of the place had worn his hat. "But as it is the Christian practice to uncover in a place of worship," he continued, "I will ask those young Jewish gentlemen down there to kindly remove



Charles Haddon Spurgeon preaching to 23,654 persons at the Crystal Palace on Fast Day, October 7, 1857.

their hats." There was no need to make any further remark, but who else could have dealt with a similar situation in such an effective manner?

During the course of the services at Surrey Gardens Music Hall, the Indian Mutiny broke out, and when a fast day was proclaimed, C. H. Spurgeon was invited by the directors of the Crystal Palace to hold a service in the centre transept of the building, a collection to be taken on behalf of the national fund for the sufferers through the Mutiny. He accepted, and on October 7, 1857, addressed the largest congregation to which he ever preached inside a building. No fewer than 23,654 persons were present, and the scene was a most impressive one. The collection amounted to five hundred pounds, to which the Crystal Palace Company added another two hundred, and when the preacher refused to accept any fee for his services another fifty pounds was given by the company to the Tabernacle Building Fund. Even before the service itself one man was led to think of eternal matters as a result of the effort, and was converted to God. It was arranged that the preacher should use the Music Hall pulpit, and a day or two before the service he went to the Palace in order to test the acoustic properties of the building and decide where the pulpit should be placed. Standing at a certain point he cried in stentorian tones, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," while friends in various parts of the transept waited to hear if the words could be recognised distinctly. A long time afterwards it transpired that a carpenter working in one of the galleries, knowing nothing of what was going on below, heard what seemed to him a voice from heaven repeating the above text. He was smitten with conviction on account of sin, put down his tools, and going home found peace and life after a time of spiritual struggling. The

source of the voice only became known to him, when on his death-bed he told a visitor the story of his conversion.

The exertion of preaching to such a huge audience must have been great, although C. H. Spurgeon tells us he did not at the close feel conscious of any unusual fatigue. But that Wednesday night he went to bed and slept continuously until Friday morning, an experience he had at no other period of his life. All through Thursday Mrs. Spurgeon went at intervals to look at her husband, but finding him sleeping peacefully she wisely let him rest until nature should be satisfied.

The last service at the Music Hall was held on Sunday morning, December 11th, 1859, when C. H. Spurgeon preached from St. Paul's farewell words to the Ephesian elders: "Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." The sermon, which reviewed the events of the past three years, was a particularly solemn one, and many of the people present were moved to tears. The discontinuance of the services was decided upon as a matter of principle. The proprietors of the Hall and Gardens had wished to open the grounds to the public on Sundays, a course to which those responsible for the morning services were strongly opposed. For a time better counsels prevailed, but at last the directors came to the determination to open the Gardens as a public resort on Sunday, December 18th, 1859, and so the authorities of New Park Street Chapel closed their long series of evangelistic services on the morning of the previous Sabbath. The rent paid by the church for the use of the Hall had been the company's chief source of revenue, and from the time that this ceased, the place failed to be a financial success. The fees for Sunday admissions were insignificant, and although

various attempts were made to gain popularity and fill the company's coffers, the venture never paid from the time that the services ceased.

The Music Hall period has been dealt with at some length, because it marked not only an important period in C. H. Spurgeon's life and ministry, but an epoch in the religious history of the 19th century. In the cities and towns, at any rate, it had been so long since preachers attempted to meet the needs of the masses, that few of the lower middle and artisan classes ever entered a place of worship. The Exeter Hall meetings had attracted some of these people, but it was the Music Hall services that brought them once again into touch with Christianity and the churches, and showed to clergymen and ministers their responsibility to put the Gospel intelligibly before the common people. The result was that many churches, led by Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral, as already stated, threw open their doors to the working classes, who readily appreciated the efforts made on behalf of their spiritual welfare. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, at a later period, and in a different connection, made a blunt remark which well expressed the character of the preaching that had obtained generally, prior to the Music Hall services. "Christ said, 'Feed My sheep, feed My lambs,'" he declared. "Some preachers, however, put the food so high that neither lambs nor sheep can reach it. They seem to have read the text, 'Feed My giraffes.'" "We are to feed men with the bread of life," he remarked, on another occasion, "but that does not mean we are to ram a quartern loaf down their throats."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TURNING OF THE TIDE: DOCTRINAL CONTROVERSIES.

WITH continued popularity and success, which no amount of abuse could lessen, the tide of criticism began slowly to turn. Complimentary notices of the preacher and his work became more frequent in the newspapers and reviews, and the repeated visits of distinguished scholars and eminent statesmen to the young preacher's services, compelled the writers to recognise his ability and gift, and to change their opinions of his work. But he was quite independent of their praise, any distinction which accrued to him through their efforts being due to blame and censure rather than to eulogy or recommendation. When the critics changed their style, the young minister might well have used Dr. Johnson's words to Lord Chesterfield: "The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent . . . till I am known and do not want it." Some journals, however, besides those that have been referred to earlier, were clear-sighted enough to perceive Charles Haddon Spurgeon's greatness while he was yet being abused, and generously recognised his worth. One of the ablest criticisms during the music-hall period appeared in *The Evening Star*:—

"There never yet was a popular orator who did not talk

more and better with his arms than with his tongue," said the writer. "Mr. Spurgeon knows this instinctively. When he has read his text, he does not fasten his eyes on a manuscript, and his hands to a cushion. As soon as he begins to speak, he begins to act,—and that not as if declaiming on the stage, but as if conversing with you in the street. He seems to shake hands with all around, and put everyone at his ease. There is no laboured exordium, making you wonder by what ingenious winding he will get back to his subject; but a trite saying, an apt quotation, a simple allegory, one or two familiar sentences, making all who hear feel interested and at home. Then there is no philosophical pomp of exposition,—but just two or three catch-words, rather to guide than to confine attention. Presently comes, by way of illustration, a gleam of humour,—perhaps a stroke of downright vulgarity,—it may be, a wretched pun. The people are amused, but they are not left at liberty to laugh. The preacher's comedy does but light up his solemn earnestness. He is painting some scene of death-bed remorse, or of timely repentance; some Magdalene's forgiveness, or some prodigal's return. His colours are taken from the earth and sky of common human experience and aspiration. He dips his pencil, so to speak, in the veins of the nearest spectator, and makes his work a part of every man's nature. His images are drawn from the homes of the common people, the daily toil for daily bread, the nightly rest of tired labour, the mother's love for a wayward boy, the father's tenderness to a sick daughter. His anecdotes are not far-fetched, they have a natural pathos. He tells how some despairing unfortunate, hastening with her last penny to the suicide's bridge, was stopped by the sound of psalmody, and turned into his chapel; or how some widow's son, running away from his mother's home, was brought

back by the recollection of a prayer, and sits now in that pew. He does not narrate occurrences, but describes them, with a rough, graphic force and faithfulness. He does not reason out his doctrines, but announces, explains, and applies them. He ventures a political allusion, and it goes right to the democratic heart. In the open air, someone may interrupt or interrogate, and the response is a new effect. In short, this man preaches Christianity—his Christianity, at any rate,—as Ernest Jones preaches Chartism, and as Gough preaches temperance. Is it any wonder that he meets with like success? Or is he either to be blamed or scorned? Let it first be remembered that Latimer was not less homely when he preached before the king,—nor South less humorous when he cowed Rochester,—nor Whitefield less declamatory when he moved Hume and Franklin,—nor Rowland Hill less vulgar, though brother to a baronet. To us, it appears that dulness is the worst fault possible to a man whose first business it is to interest,—that the dignity of the pulpit is best consulted by making it attractive,—and that the clergy of all denominations might get some frequent hints for the composition of their sermons from the young Baptist preacher who never went to college.”

But what perhaps more than anything else had the effect of turning public opinion in favour of C. H. Spurgeon was a letter which appeared in the *Times* of April 15th, 1857, over the signature *Habitans in Sicco*, which was known to be written by an eminent scholar. The letter was cast in a light vein, though underlying the humorous and almost bantering tone, a serious lesson was conveyed which, as after events proved, was not given in vain. The very appearance of a contribution of such unusual character in the staid and solid pages of the great daily, led to universal comment,

and so important a part did the letter play, that we reproduce the whole of it:—

“PREACHING *and* PREACHING.

.“ To the Editor of *The Times*.

“SIR,—One Sunday morning, about a month ago, my wife said, ‘Let us send the children to St. Margaret’s to hear the Archbishop of —— preach on behalf of the Society of Aged Ecclesiastical Cripples, which is to celebrate to-day its three-hundreth anniversary.’ So the children went, though the parents, for reasons immaterial to mention, could not go with them. ‘Well, children, how did you like the Archbishop of ——, and what did he say about the Aged Ecclesiastical Cripples?’ Here the children—for it was during their dinner—attacked their food with great voracity; but never a word could we get out of their mouths about the spiritual feast of which they had just partaken. No! not even the text could they bring out. The more they were pressed the more they blushed and hung their heads over their plates until, at last, in a rage, I accused them of having fallen asleep during the service. This charge threw my first-born on his defence, and he sobbed out the truth, for by this time their eyes were full of tears. ‘Why, papa! we can’t say what the Archbishop of —— said, because we could not hear a word. He is very old, and has got no teeth, and do you know, I don’t think he has got any tongue either, for though we saw his lips moving, we could not hear a single word.’ On this I said no more, but I thought a good deal of ‘the Aged Ecclesiastical Cripples’ and their venerable advocate, and being something of a philologist, I indulged in dreamy speculations on the possibility of an alphabet composed entirely of labials; and if my wife had not roused me from my dream by some mere matter-of-fact

question, I almost think I should have given my reflections to the world in the shape of a small pamphlet entitled, 'The Language of Labials; or how to Preach Sermons without the Aid of either Tongue or Teeth,' published for the benefit of the Society of Aged Ecclesiastical Cripples, and dedicated, of course, by permission, to the Archbishop of —.

"Now listen to another story: A friend of mine, a Scotch Presbyterian, comes up to town and says, 'I want to hear Spurgeon; let us go.' Now, I am supposed to be a High Churchman, so I answered, 'What! go and hear a Calvinist,—a Baptist,—a man who ought to be ashamed of himself for being so near the Church and yet not within its pale?' 'Never mind, come and hear him.' Well we went yesterday morning to the Music Hall in the Surrey Gardens. At first I felt a strange sensation of wrong-doing. It was something like going to a morning theatrical performance on Sunday; nor did a terrific gust of wind (which sent the Arctic regions, erected out of laths and pasteboard, in a style regardless of expense, flying across the water of the lake) tend to cheer a mind depressed by the novelty of the scene. Fancy a congregation consisting of ten thousand souls, streaming into the hall, mounting the galleries, humming, buzzing, and swarming—a mighty hive of bees,—eager to secure at first the best places, and at last, any place at all. After waiting more than half-an-hour,—for if you wish to have a seat, you must be there at least that space of time in advance,—Mr. Spurgeon ascended the tribune. To the hum, and rush, and trampling of men, succeeded a low, concentrated thrill and murmur of devotion, which seemed to run at once, like an electric current, through the breast of everyone present; and by this magnetic chain, the preacher held us fast bound for about two hours. It is not my purpose to give a summary of his discourse. It is

enough to say of his voice, that its power and volume are sufficient to reach everyone in that vast assembly; of his language, that it is neither high-flown nor homely; of his style, that it is at times familiar, at times declamatory, but always happy, and often eloquent; of his doctrine, that neither the Calvinist nor the Baptist appears in the forefront of the battle which is waged by Mr. Spurgeon with relentless animosity, and with gospel weapons, against irreligion, cant, hypocrisy, pride, and those secret bosom sins which so easily beset a man in daily life; and to sum up all in a word, it is enough to say of the man himself that he impresses you with a perfect conviction of his sincerity.

“But I have not written so much about my children’s want of spiritual food when they listened to the mumbling of the Archbishop of —, and my own banquet at the Surrey Gardens, without a desire to draw a practical conclusion from these two stories, and to point them by a moral. Here is a man not more Calvinistic than many an incumbent of the Established Church who ‘humbles and mumbles,’ as old Latimer says, over his liturgy and text. Here is a man who says the complete immersion, or something of the kind, of adults is necessary to baptism. These are his faults of doctrine; but, if I were the examining chaplain of the Archbishop of —, I would say, ‘May it please your Grace, here is a man able to preach eloquently, able to fill the largest church in England with his voice, and, what is more to the purpose, with people. And may it please your Grace, here are two churches in the Metropolis, St. Paul’s and Westminster Abbey. What does your Grace think of inviting Mr. Spurgeon, this heretical Calvinist and Baptist, who is able to draw ten thousand souls after him, just to try his voice, some Sunday morning, in the nave of either of those churches? At any rate, I will answer for one thing that, if

he preaches in Westminster Abbey, we shall not have a repetition of the disgraceful practice, now common in that church, of having the sermon *before* the anthem, in order that those who would quit the church when the arid sermon begins, may be forced to stay it out for the sake of the music which follows it.' But I am not, I am sorry to say, examining chaplain to the Archbishop of —, so I can only send you this letter from the devotional desert in which I reside, and sign myself,—

“HABITANS IN SICCO.”

“Broad Phylactery, Westminster.”

This letter with the *Times* leader thereupon, in which the influential journal suggested that some clergyman of the Evangelical party, with a strong voice, might do what Charles Haddon Spurgeon was already doing, the doctrines of the two being “in reality much the same,” caused a mild sensation in the ecclesiastical world, and the fact that within a year services for working men were being held in Westminster Abbey, and shortly afterwards popular services in St. Paul’s Cathedral, justify the belief that the new movement in the Established Church was not unconnected with the appearance of this letter and leader.

From this time it became “respectable” to go to hear the young Baptist preacher, and gradually the abuse ceased until even those most opposed to him ecclesiastically and doctrinally, spoke well of his gift and his labours. He began to have many powerful and distinguished friends, too, one of the closest at this period being John Ruskin. The preacher had removed from New Kent Road to Nightingale Lane, Clapham, and it was here, during an illness, towards the end of 1858, that he received a visit from the illustrious writer, which has been most interestingly described by Mrs.

Spurgeon. "How well I remember the intense love and devotion displayed by Mr. Ruskin as he threw himself on his knees by the dear patient's side and embraced him with tender affection and tears. 'My brother, my dear brother,' he said, 'how grieved I am to see you thus!' His sorrow and sympathy were most touching and comforting. He had brought with him two charming engravings—gems of artistic taste, which still adorn the walls of one of the rooms at 'Westwood,' and some bottles of wine of a rare vintage which he hoped would prove a cordial to the sufferer's much weakened frame. My husband was greatly moved by the love and consideration so graciously expressed, and he very often referred to it afterwards in grateful appreciation."

In time, as is generally known, Ruskin's theological opinions considerably changed, but he always entertained a great admiration and a kindly regard for the Baptist pastor who, while disagreeing with the author's views, reciprocated the feelings of esteem. Charles Haddon Spurgeon's library included a large number of Ruskin's works, first editions presented and inscribed by the author. The markings on the pages clearly prove that they were well read by their recipient, and indeed few books of a secular character gave the preacher greater pleasure than "Stones of Venice," and kindred works from John Ruskin's pen. The opinion which the distinguished author entertained of C. H. Spurgeon's gifts and abilities, even after he disagreed with his views, is shown by his telling the latter he was a fool "for devoting your time and talents to that mob of people down at Newington when you might employ them so much more profitably upon the intellectual and cultured few." So far from being flattered by the compliment implied, the preacher declared that he always liked to be the means of saving people whose souls

were worth saving, and he was quite content to be the minister of the "mob of people down at Newington," and let those who wished to do so look after the cultured and refined. John Ruskin, it is not generally known, gave a hundred pounds towards the Tabernacle Building Fund.

The two men long corresponded, and their letters, so characteristic of each, are exceedingly interesting. On November 25th, 1862, Ruskin wrote to C. H. Spurgeon from Denmark Hill: "Dear friend, I want a chat with you. Is it possible to get it—quietly—and how and where and when? I'll come to you—or you shall come here—or whatever you like. I am in England only for ten days, being too much disgusted with your goings on—*yours*, as much as everybody else's—to be able to exist among you any longer. But I want to say 'good-bye' before going to my den in the Alps. Ever, with sincerest remembrances to Mrs. Spurgeon, affectionately yours, J. Ruskin." To this the preacher replied, from his home: "My dear Mr. Ruskin, I thought you had cast me off; but I perceive that you let me alone when all is right, and only look me up when you are getting disgusted with me. May the disgust increase if it shall bring me oftener into your company! I shall be delighted to see you to-morrow *here*, at any time from 10 to 12, if this will suit you. I wish *I* had a den in the Alps to go to; but it is of no use for me to grow surly, for I am compelled to live amongst you sinners, and however disgusted I may get with you all, I must put up with you, for neither Nature nor Providence will afford a den for me.—Yours ever, most truly and affectionately, C. H. Spurgeon."

During one of the great author's visits to Nightingale Lane, the two men discussed the question of supernatural interpositions, and John Ruskin told the preacher of a remarkable incident that had come within his knowledge,

and which both agreed was an instance of direct and Divine preservation from a dreadful death. A Christian gentleman, a widower, desirous of taking the tenancy of a certain old farmhouse in the country, visited it with his children, and while he conversed with the owner, the youngsters explored the house and garden. At last they found a door leading to the cellars, and were rushing helter-skelter down the gloomy staircase, when suddenly at the bottom appeared what seemed to be their dead mother, with outstretched arms, waving them back. They ran excitedly to inform their father of the strange sight that had greeted their eyes, and amazed he went to examine the staircase, which had not been used for many a long year. At the foot was found a deep and open well, quite unguarded, into which, but for the apparition, the children would have fallen and undoubtedly been killed. When asked if he believed in Divine interpositions, C. H. Spurgeon used to repeat this story of John Ruskin's.

To this period belong what was known as "The Rivulet Controversy," and also the discussion that centred around the Rev. J. Baldwin Brown's "Divine Life in Man." Reference must be made to these, as C. H. Spurgeon joined in the fray, and his action then was a forecast of the part he took later in the more notable "Down-grade Controversy." Throughout his career the great preacher was consistent in opposing what he believed to be serious error, and personal considerations were never allowed by him to stand in the way of upholding truth and righteousness.

At the end of 1855 appeared a small volume of hymns, written by the Rev. Thomas Toke Lynch, entitled, "The Rivulet; or Hymns for the Heart and Voice," which attracted no unusual attention until Mr. James Grant reviewed it in the *Morning Advertiser*, and declared the verses



Charles Haddon and Mrs. Spurgeon's second home after marriage, Helensburgh House,
Nightingale Lane, Clapham.

to be devoid of "one particle of vital religion or evangelical piety." Nearly the whole, he said, might have been written by a Deist; and a very large portion of the hymns might be sung by a congregation of Freethinkers. The *Eclectic Review* came to the rescue of Mr. Lynch, and before long all the Nonconformist journals and many of the most distinguished ministers were engaged in a heated controversy. The Revs. Henry Allon, Newman Hall and Thomas Binney supported the poet, and thereby lent an importance to the discussion which it might not otherwise have had. Charles Haddon Spurgeon's contribution consisted of the penning of a long review of the book in *The Christian Cabinet*, in which he said, "it is our firm opinion that until Butler's 'Hudibras' is sung in Heaven, Mr. Lynch's 'Rivulet' will not be adopted in the assemblies of the saints below. There is scarcely an old woman in our churches who would not imitate that ancient dame in Scotland who hurled her stool at the minister's head, should any of us venture to mount our pulpits and exclaim, Let us commence the present service by singing the 34th hymn in 'The Rivulet.'" Theologically, he was at a loss to judge the verses, for there was so little of the doctrinal element in them, and that little so indefinite, that one could scarcely guess the author's doctrinal views at all. "Certainly, some verses are bad,—bad in the most unmitigated sense of that word; but others of them, like noses of wax, will fit more than one face. There are sweet sentences which would become the lips of those rich poets of early times in whom quaintness of style and weight of matter were united, but an unkind observer will notice that even these are not angular enough to provoke the hostility of the Unitarian, and might be uttered alike by the lover and the hater of what we are well known to regard as the Gospel. . . . If I should ever be on amicable terms with the chief of the

Ojibewas," continued C. H. Spurgeon, "I might suggest several verses from Mr. Lynch as a portion of a liturgy to be used on the next occasion when he bows before the Great Spirit of the West wind, for there are some most appropriate sonnets for the worship of the God of nature which the unenlightened savage would understand quite as well as the believer in Revelation, and might perhaps receive rather more readily."

The Review was good-natured throughout, and Mr. Lynch himself declared, "This review of Mr. Spurgeon's enjoys the credit with me of being the only thing on his side—that is *against* me—that was impertinent without being malevolent." For a long time the controversy continued, and as a result of the excitement arising from the protests made against the doctrine, or absence of doctrine, in the book, the Congregational Union actually postponed its autumn session. Whatever else resulted, the trouble had the effect of bringing prominently before the churches the fundamental truths of the Gospel, and those on the side of orthodoxy generally agreed that real good had accrued from the prolonged discussion. A curious feature of the controversy was that practically all the critics, favourable and adverse, spoke kindly of the poetry, as distinct from the theology, although many literary writers since have described the verses as little better than doggerel, an opinion in which we certainly agree.

Four years later British Nonconformity was again in the throes of a doctrinal battle. The Rev. J. Howard Hinton had, in "The Baptist Magazine" for March and April, 1860, passed strictures upon certain passages in the Rev. J. B. Brown's "Divine Life in Man," which showed the author of the book to be unsound upon the doctrine of the Atonement. In noticing these strictures, *The Freeman*, generally

regarded as the organ of the Baptist denomination, seemed to lean rather to Mr. Brown than to his critic, and the attitude of that journal called forth a protest from seven prominent Baptist ministers, including Dr. Angus and Charles Haddon Spurgeon. *The Freeman* justified its reviewers' attitude and further correspondence ensued, but the discussion between the protesting ministers and the denominational organ never came to any satisfactory conclusion, and so far as Charles Haddon Spurgeon was concerned, his last effort in this particular controversy was a sermon on April 15th, 1860, dealing with the burning questions of the hour, in which he said: "I have often thought, the best answer to the new theology is, that the true Gospel was always preached to the poor: 'The poor have the Gospel preached to them.' I am sure that the poor will never learn *the Gospel* of these new divines, for they cannot make head or tail of it; nor will the rich either. After you have read one of their volumes, you have not the least idea what the book is about until you have gone through it eight or nine times, and then you begin to think you are very stupid for having ever read such inflated heresy, for it sours your temper, and makes you feel angry, to see the precious things of God trodden under foot. Some of us must stand out against these attacks on truth, although we love not controversy. We rejoice in the liberty of our fellow-men, and would have them proclaim their convictions; but if they touch these precious things, they touch the apple of our eye. We can allow a thousand opinions in the world, but that which infringes upon the doctrine of a covenant salvation, through the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, —against that we must, and will, enter our hearty and solemn protest, as long as God spares us."

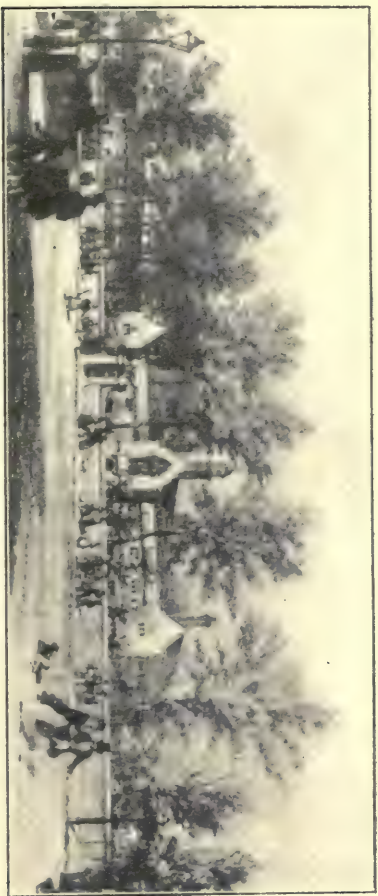
CHAPTER XVIII.

THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE BEGUN.

AS already intimated, when the authorities of New Park Street Chapel saw that their young pastor's popularity and success were likely to be permanent, they came to the conclusion that a new and very much larger chapel would have to be erected. Charles Haddon Spurgeon had himself arrived at a similar decision, and he determined that unless this could be done, he would resign his pastorate and become a travelling evangelist. Of course, the deacons would not hear of the latter proposal, and being heartily agreed as to the necessity of a larger chapel, a building committee was appointed in June, 1856, and arranged for a public meeting in aid of the project, to be held on Monday, September 29th of that year. The Tabernacle, as the building had already come to be called, was to provide five thousand sittings, with standing room for not less than a thousand, and the total cost was estimated at £12,000. As a matter of fact the ultimate expenditure was £31,000, a sum so great, that had it been anticipated, some of the deacons might well have hesitated in embarking on such an enterprise. Many of the newspapers, including *The Times*, *The Daily News* and *The Saturday Review*, had declared that C. H. Spurgeon and his friends wanted to build a chapel that would hold fifteen thousand persons, but at the first public meeting in aid of the new Tabernacle, the pastor denied that such a thought had ever been entertained. "It has, however,"

he explained, "been judged that a place of worship capable of accommodating about five thousand persons is necessary. For my own part, I have no wish for such a large sanctuary; only I cannot bear to see, Sabbath after Sabbath, as many people go away as are able to enter the chapel where we have been accustomed to assemble for worship. It is the will of people to come in great multitudes to listen to my proclamation of the truths of the Gospel; I have not asked them to come, it is of their own free will that they meet with us; and if it is a sin for me to have so many hearers, it is at least an uncommon sin, which many others would like to commit if they could. It has been said, 'Let those who wish to hear Mr. Spurgeon pay for their seats;' but that method would defeat the object I have in view. I want to preach to those who cannot afford to pay for seats in a chapel, and it is my wish to admit as many of the general public as possible."

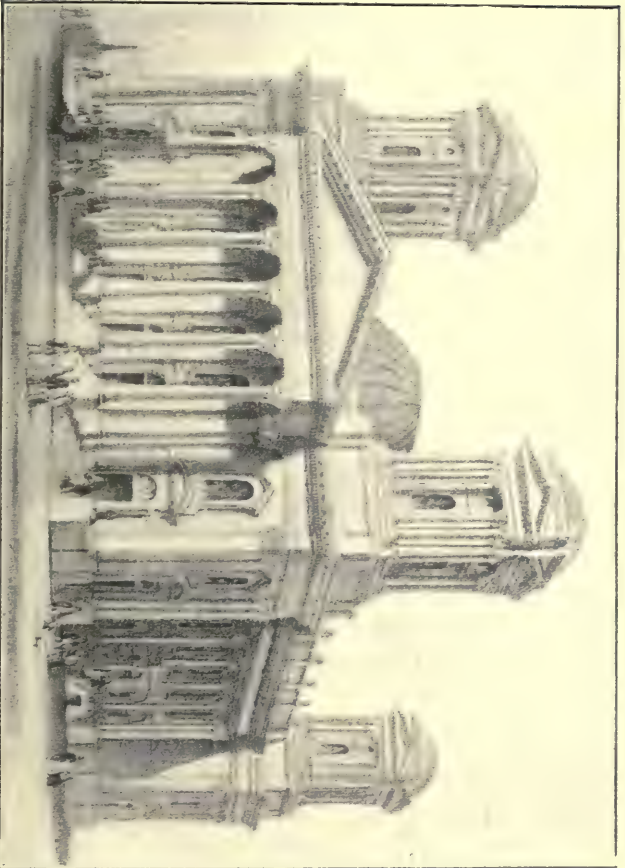
A fund was opened, and after a second large meeting held on March 23rd, 1857, at which £500 was subscribed, the total sum collected amounted to £4,500, whilst on December 13th, 1858, this had increased to £9,418 19s. 7d., showing an average of £348 17s. per month since the first meeting, twenty-seven months earlier. Much difficulty was experienced in securing an eligible site. Some were for going to Kensington and others to Holloway, but at a meeting at New Park Street, on December 13th, 1858, it was announced that after long and tedious negotiations, the Fishmongers' Company had promised to sell a portion of its land at Newington, Mr. W. Joynson, of St. Mary Cray, a great admirer and friend of the young preacher, agreeing to give £400 towards the expense of obtaining an Act of Parliament should such be necessary to legalise the sale of



The site of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, showing the old almshouses of the Fishmongers' Company before they were pulled down.

the land. The ground had been occupied since 1618 by St. Peter's Hospital, the almshouses of the Fishmongers' Company, but these had recently been rebuilt at Wandsworth, and the old site, since the removal of the pensioners, presented anything but a picturesque appearance. The acquirement of the land for the erection of the Tabernacle was therefore a gain not only to the New Park Street congregation, but also to the district of Newington. The historical associations of that neighbourhood, too, were very apposite, for, as C. H. Spurgeon has pointed out, close by, if not on the very spot where thousands have been brought to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, a number of Englishmen were three centuries before burnt at the stake for holding doctrines identical with those of the church meeting in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. In one case we read of some Baptists being burnt "at the Butts at Newington," while another record, dated 1546, tells how "three men were condemned as Anabaptists and brente in the highway beyond Southwark towards Newington."

Having secured the site, the building committee next offered premiums of £50, £30, and £20 for the three best designs for the new chapel. Certain conditions as to size were laid down, and with regard to the style of architecture, it was announced that "Gothic designs will not be accepted by the comr'ttee. The plan of the Surrey Music Hall has proved to be acoustically good and will be decidedly preferred." More than two hundred and fifty architects applied for the circular in which these particulars were set forth, and by January 31st, 1859, the last day for receiving plans, sixty-two sets of drawings and one model had been received. These were exhibited in the Newington Horse and Carriage Repository, and large numbers of the



The architect's design which, with certain modifications, was adopted for the Metropolitan Tabernacle.
The towers, that were to have cost £1,000 each, were omitted.

general public went to see them. A vote for the awarding of the first and third prizes was taken among the competitors, and about forty selected the design of Mr. E. Cookworthy Robins for the first premium of £50. This architect's set of drawings had been placed among the first three by C. H. Spurgeon and the building committee, but for various reasons the design of Mr. W. W. Pocock, to whom the committee awarded the second premium, was considered more suitable for the new chapel, and it was adopted with considerable modifications, chief among which was the abandonment of the towers at the four corners. These would have cost a thousand pounds each, and C. H. Spurgeon and his friends considered that the money could be far more usefully expended.

Preparations for the building of the great church being now in an advanced stage, Sir Samuel Morton Peto, M.P., laid the foundation stone on August 16th, 1859, in the presence of about three thousand persons. The meeting was a most inspiring one. It began with the singing of the hundredth Psalm, and prayer offered by the pastor. Then a declaration was read on behalf of the deacons, rehearsing the history of the church, after which C. H. Spurgeon made the following statement:—

“In the bottle which is to be placed under the stone, we have put no money,—for one good reason, that we have none to spare. We have not put newspapers, because, albeit we admire and love the liberty of the Press, yet that is not so immediately concerned in this edifice. The articles placed under the stone are simply these:—the Bible, the Word of God; we put that as the foundation of our church. Upon this rock doth Christ build the ministration of His truth. We know of nothing else as our standard. Together with this, we have put “The Baptist Confession

of Faith," which was signed in the olden times by Benjamin Keach, one of my eminent predecessors. We put also the declaration of the deacons, which you have just heard read, printed on parchment. There is also an edition of Dr. Rippon's Hymn Book, published just before he died; and then, in the last place, there is a programme of this day's proceedings. I do not suppose that the New Zealander who, one day, is to sit on the broken arch of London Bridge, will make much out of it. If we had put gold and silver there, it is possible he might have taken it back to New Zealand with him; but I should not wonder, if ever England is destroyed, these relics will find their way into some museum in Australia or America, where people will spell over some of our old-fashioned names, and wonder whoever those good men could be who are inscribed here, as Samuel Gale, James Low, Thomas Olney, Thomas Cook, George Winsor, William P. Olney, George Moore, and C. H. Spurgeon. And I think they will say, 'Oh! depend upon it, they were some good men, so they put them in stone there.' These deacons *are* living stones, indeed; they have served this church well and long. Honour to whom honour is due. I am glad to put their names with mine here; and I hope we shall live together for ever in eternity."

Sir Morton Peto, having laid the stone and congratulated the pastor and church, on commencing such a magnificent building, which he trusted would be opened free of debt, C. H. Spurgeon again spoke at some length upon the great chapel which was to be erected. He declared that it was to him a matter of congratulation that the building would be Grecian in its style of architecture. Every Baptist chapel, he thought, should be Grecian—never Gothic—for Greek was the sacred tongue in which the fullest revelation

of God's will was made known. He next set forth the belief of the church which would later on meet in the completed building, and finally concluded with some remarks upon the prospects before them. "I look on this Tabernacle," he said, "as only the beginning; within the last six months we have started two churches,—one in Wandsworth and the other in Greenwich,—and the Lord has prospered them; the pool of baptism has often been stirred with converts. And what we have done in two places, I am about to do in a third, and we will do it, not for the third or the fourth, but for the hundredth time, God being our Helper. I am sure I may make my strongest appeal to my brethren, because we do not mean to build this Tabernacle as our nest, and then to be idle. We must go from strength to strength, and be a missionary church, and never rest until, not only this neighbourhood, but our country, of which it is said that some parts are as dark as India, shall have been enlightened with the Gospel."

At the conclusion of this address an opportunity was given for those who desired, to make contributions towards the building fund. First of all Mr. Inskip, of Bristol, declared that he was there as the representative of a wealthy gentleman, then confined to a sick chamber, whose riches were devoted to the service of God. He had sent Mr. Inskip there to say that he would give three thousand pounds towards the fund, and if twenty gentlemen would come forward with one hundred pounds each upon the opening of the chapel, he was prepared to put down twenty hundreds more to meet theirs. Many other donations were given that afternoon, and at the evening meeting, which was presided over by the Lord Mayor of London (Alderman Wire), the contributions of the day were brought up to nearly five thousand pounds. Before many weeks had elapsed, twenty

gentlemen had come forward and given the £2,000 necessary to claim a like amount from Mr. Inskip's anonymous friend, who was delighted at the result of his offer. By April 2nd, 1860, the fund had grown to £18,904 15s. 2d. It soon became evident that instead of £12,000, the original estimate of the cost of the building would have to be at least doubled, and some of the members of the committee rather shrank from this added responsibility. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, however, had no fears. From the first he secretly believed that the original estimate would prove altogether inadequate, but his faith in God was such that he told his friends, "It may as well be twenty thousand as ten, for we shall get one amount as readily as the other." As to how the money was to be obtained his method was simple: "Brethren, we must pray that God will be pleased to give us the money, and we shall surely have it. If we had possessed more faith, we should have had it before now; and when this Tabernacle is built, we shall find money enough to build a dozen. Look at what Mr. Muller, of Bristol, has done by faith and prayer. When this land was threatened with famine, people said, 'What will you do now, Mr. Muller?' 'Pray to God,' was the good man's answer. He did pray, and the result was, that he had an overwhelming increase." Charles Haddon Spurgeon, too, prayed earnestly and in full faith, with the result that he received equally remarkable answers to his petitions. About £10,000 had been collected, and he was riding one day with a friend to preach in the country, when a gentleman overtook the trap and asked the preacher to come into his gig. C. H. Spurgeon acceded to the request, and the gentleman said, "You have got to build that big place; you will find that many friends will feel nervous over it. Now as a business man, I am sure you will succeed, and beside that,

God is with the work and it cannot fail. I want you never to feel anxious or downcast about it." The preacher replied that it *was* a great work, and he believed the Lord would enable him to carry it through. "What do you think," asked the gentleman, "would be required, at the outside, to finish it off altogether?" "Twenty thousand pounds in addition to what we have," said C. H. Spurgeon. "Then I will let you have the twenty thousand pounds," replied the other, "on the condition that you shall keep only what you need of it to finish the building. Mark," he added, "I do not expect to give more than £50; but you shall have bonds and leases to the full value of £20,000 to fall back upon."

A very large proportion of the cost of the Tabernacle was obtained by Charles Haddon Spurgeon himself, who went all over the kingdom preaching in aid of the building fund. He never gained a penny for his own use from the provincial towns he visited, but many thousands of pounds were contributed by the sympathetic congregations whom he delighted with his ministry. On one visit to Scotland, lasting only a few days, for instance, the collections in aid of the building fund amounted to £391. But it was not only for the benefit of his own building that C. H. Spurgeon travelled to different parts of the country. Scores of needy chapels sought his services and he gave them without hesitation, the phenomenal collections which always succeeded his sermons going entirely to the local funds. For such a purpose he preached twice in the pavilion of the Grand Stand, Epsom, on Friday, June 11th, 1858, and the local chapel benefited to the extent of £60 which was collected. The congregations both in the morning and in the afternoon numbered about fifteen hundred. Another

kindly act of the young minister was that which he performed on Sunday, July 10th, 1859. A violent storm had a little before passed over London, and the lightning had struck a tree on Clapham Common, killing a man who stood beneath it. The incident impressed C. H. Spurgeon, and he determined to preach on the fatal spot and to make a collection for the widow of the dead man. Ten thousand persons gathered on the Common, and using a waggon as a pulpit, the preacher delivered a stirring and solemn sermon from the text, St. Luke xii. 40, "Be ye therefore ready also." The congregation contributed £27 10s. 4d. towards the support of the distressed widow.

In August, 1858, C. H. Spurgeon first visited Ireland, and preached to huge congregations in Belfast. Irish friends were amongst the most generous contributors to the Tabernacle Building Fund, and the great preacher many times afterwards visited the Sister Isle. On more than one occasion he was delighted to find, in his passage between the two coasts, that the majority of the ship's crew was composed of earnest Christian men, who held meetings regularly for prayer, and for the reading of the preacher's own sermons.

A memorable visit was paid to the village of Castleton, between Newport and Cardiff, on July 20, 1859, when C. H. Spurgeon preached twice in a field which gradually sloped to a level at the bottom, enabling all those present to see and hear him distinctly. The congregations at each service numbered about ten thousand persons. In May of the following year he preached in the open air at Abercarne to twenty thousand people. Among the most notable of the services away from London, were those which the great preacher conducted in Paris during February, 1860. He had been asked to go over to the French capital, and readily

consented to preach five sermons in three days, believing that the collections were to be in aid of the American Church, where three of the services were held. But those who had invited him to that church declared that whatever might be contributed should go to the Tabernacle Building Fund, and altogether a sum of £64 was given, despite the



A photo of C. H. Spurgeon taken during his first visit to Ireland.

fact that at C. H. Spurgeon's particular request the collections were not taken in the ordinary way, but by placing boxes at the doors. The contributions at the Reformed Church of the Oratory, where the remaining two services were held, amounted to £40, which sum was given

to the poor of Paris. Even this disinterested visit was made the excuse for abusive criticisms in the London Press. A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country however, and the French newspapers, including those conducted by Roman Catholics, spoke most kindly of the preacher. The *Journal des Débats* in the course of an eulogy from the pen of M. Prevost-Paradol, its principal leader writer, and one of the most distinguished *littérateurs* in Paris, said, "One listens with pleasure to his powerful and sympathetic voice, which never rises or falls beyond proper limits, and yet fills the whole church with its sweet cadences. The man who possesses these gifts and uses them so generously is not yet twenty-six years of age. It is impossible to look upon his energetic and loyal face without reading there conviction, courage and earnest desire to do the right. This orator, who is the most popular preacher in a country where liberty of speech and conscience exercises such potent influence, is not only the most modest, but also the most simple of men. It is true that he has the happiness to address a nation which does not think it necessary to be unjust in its public criticism; but after all, Mr. Spurgeon owes to himself alone the great and salutary influence which he has acquired, and yet no one could ever rightly accuse him of egotism. It is without affectation that he, unreservedly, ascribes all the glory to God. It seems to us that all disputes concerning religion ought to vanish before such an apostle; and to recognise his power is but just. As for us who have seen in this youthful and eloquent preacher one of the most happy examples of what modern Christianity and liberty can produce, we feel that it is an honour to come into contact with such a man as Mr. Spurgeon, and to exchange with him the grasp of friendship."

Later in the same year C. H. Spurgeon visited the Continent again, with Mrs. Spurgeon, going first to Belgium, where he spent some time in Antwerp and Brussels. Of the latter city he says : " In Brussels I heard a good sermon in a Romish Church. The place was crowded with people, many of them standing, though they might have had a seat for a halfpenny or a farthing ; and I stood, too ; and the good priest—for I believe he is a good man—preached the Lord Jesus with all his might. He spoke of the love of Christ, so that I, a very poor hand at the French language, could fully understand him, and my heart kept beating within me as he told of the beauties of Christ and the preciousness of His blood, and of His power to save the chief of sinners. He did not say ' justification by faith,' but he did say ' efficacy of the blood,' which comes to very much the same thing. He did not tell us that we were saved by grace and not by our works ; but he did say that all the works of men were less than nothing when brought into competition with the blood of Christ, and that the blood of Jesus alone could save. True, there were objectionable sentences, as naturally there must be in a discourse delivered under such circumstances ; but I could have gone to the preacher and have said to him, ' Brother, you have spoken the truth ;' and if I had been handling his text I must have treated it in the same way as he did, if I could have done it as well."

From Brussels the preacher and his wife went to Namur, down the Meuse to Chaufontaine, thence to Cologne, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Baden-Baden, Freiburg, Schaffhausen, Zurich, Lucerne, and at last to the city of Calvin, whither Dr. Merle D'Aubigné had invited the distinguished English divine. They missed one another at the station, and when C. H. Spurgeon asked a gentleman in the street to direct

him, mentioning who he was, to his delight the stranger replied, "Come to my house, the very house where Calvin used to live." Both the Established and the Free Churches sought to honour the great English minister, and he preached to a crowded congregation in the cathedral at Geneva, from Calvin's pulpit and in Calvin's gown. This was probably the only time that C. H. Spurgeon ever preached in a gown, and his comment thereon is amusing. "I did not feel very happy," he says, "when I came out in full canonicals, but the request was put to me in such a beautiful way that I could have worn the Pope's tiara if by so doing I could have preached the Gospel more freely." Before he left he was presented with a handsome medal bearing Calvin's likeness on the obverse side, and on the reverse the text in French, "He endured as seeing Him who is invisible." "I am not superstitious," declared C. H. Spurgeon, "but the first time I saw this medal bearing the venerated likeness of John Calvin I kissed it."

From Geneva the travellers went to Chamouin, and afterwards crossed the Alps by the Simplon Pass, accepting *en route* the hospitality of the monks at the hospice which crowns the mountain top. "It pleased me," said the preacher, in recounting his journeys afterwards, "to find that they were Augustinian monks, because next to Calvin I love Augustine. I feel that Augustine's works were the great mine out of which Calvin dug his mental wealth; and the Augustinian monks, in their acts of charity, seemed to say, 'Our Master was a teacher of grace, and we will practise it, and give to all comers whatsoever they shall need, without money and without price.' Those monks are worthy of great honour; there they are spending the best and noblest period of their lives on the top of a bleak and barren mountain that they may minister to the necessities of

the poor. They go out in the cold nights and bring in those that are frostbitten; they dig them out from under the snow, simply that they may serve God by helping their fellow-men. I pray God to bless the good works of these monks of the Augustinian Order."

This Continental trip formed perhaps the most enjoyable



Charles Haddon Spurgeon, from a portrait engraved at the time the Metropolitan Tabernacle was building.

holiday that Charles Haddon Spurgeon ever spent. It extended over eight weeks, his wife accompanied him, and the visit to Geneva, with its Calvin associations, ever remained a vivid memory in the mind of the great reformer's gifted disciple.

CHAPTER XIX.

OPENING OF THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE.

ON August 21st, 1860, a great meeting was held in the unfinished Tabernacle to give thanks to God for the success which had thus far been enjoyed in the enterprise, and to raise from the friends present as much as possible of the sum still required to open the building free from debt. At this meeting Charles Haddon Spurgeon gave a very full account of the undertaking—telling of its inception, its present position, and its future purpose. With regard to the structure itself, he declared his belief that it was the most perfect triumph of acoustics that had ever been achieved, and as to its appearance the architect was to be heartily congratulated. Some visitors had expressed disappointment at the size of the Tabernacle, which seemed much smaller than they had anticipated; but the preacher was pleased at this, for it showed him, he said, that the structure did not appear huge and unsightly. To look very large a building must be generally out of proportion, for with due symmetry the idea of size was often lost. He then gave an account of the lecture hall, the various side rooms, and the galleries, each of which had separate staircases to avoid overcrowding, and spoke with great appreciation of the builder, Mr. William Higgs, a member, and afterwards a deacon, of the church. Some exception had been taken in the Press to the title, “Metropolitan”

Tabernacle, as savouring of arrogance; and one paper had suggested that possibly the preacher would style himself "The Metropolitan"; but C. H. Spurgeon at this meeting justified the adjective, for, as he stated, more than a million people had contributed, chiefly in small sums, towards the erection of the building; and so far as the word "Tabernacle" was concerned, he thought it far more appropriate than Temple, seeing that the people of God had not come to the Temple-state here, but were in the Tabernacle-state, passing through the wilderness, and the building was, therefore, only temporary. "We have not here the King in person—the Divine Solomon," he added; "till He come, we call it a Tabernacle still."

The preacher then made a bold declaration upon the "voluntary principle," of which the new Tabernacle was the embodiment. "We earnestly desire," he said, "to open this place without a farthing of debt upon it. You have heard that sentence again and again. Let me repeat it; and I pray that our brethren here, who have the command of the public Press, will repeat it again and again for me. It is not because a small debt would weigh upon this Church too much; we are not afraid of that; it is just this, we think it will tell well for the whole body of believers who rely upon the voluntary principle, if this Tabernacle is completed without a loan or a debt. Our new place of worship has been spoken of in the House of Commons, it has been mentioned in the House of Lords; and as everybody happens to know of it, since it stands so conspicuously, we want to do our utmost, and we ask our brethren to give us their help, that this forefront of Nonconformity, for the time being, may have about it no failure, no defect to which any one can point and say, 'Your voluntaryism failed to carry the project through.' I believe in the might of the

voluntary principle. I believe it to be perfectly irresistible in proportion to the power of God's Spirit in the hearts of those who exercise it. When the Spirit of God is absent, and the Church is at a low ebb, the voluntary principle has little or no power ; and then it becomes a question with many carnal-wise men, whether they shall not look to Egypt for help and stay themselves on horses. But when the Spirit of God is shed abroad, and men's hearts are in the right state, we find the voluntary principle equal to every need of the Church. Whenever I see members of any denomination turn aside and begin to take so much as a single halfpenny from the hand of the State, I think they do not believe in their God as they ought, and that the Spirit of God is not with them in all His Divine power. Only give us a minister preaching Christ and a people who will serve their God, and feel it to be their pleasure to devote themselves and their substance to His cause, and nothing is impossible.

“ I ask you to prove this to all men ; and I appeal to you to help us in the effort to raise the remnant of £8,000. I believe we shall have a good and hearty response, and that on the day of opening we shall see this place filled with a vast multitude, who will complete the work and leave not a shilling unpaid. We pledge ourselves to the Christian public that they shall be no losers by us. While this building has been going on, we have done as much as any Church for all other agencies—as much as it was possible for us to do. We hope to help other places by first giving to our young men an education when God has called them to the ministry, and afterwards helping them when they are settled. We wish our Church to become a fruitful mother of children, and pray that God may make this Tabernacle a centre from which rays of truth and light and glory may radiate to dispel the darkness of the land. We will not be an idle Church ;

we do not ask to have our load taken away, that we may eat and drink and play, but only that we may go straight on to do God's work. Of all things, I do abhor a debt. I shall feel like a guilty, sneaking sinner if I come here with even a hundred pounds debt upon the building. 'Owe no man anything' will stare me in the face whenever I try to address you. I do not believe that Scripture warrants any man in getting into debt. It may stimulate the people to raise more money, but, after all, attention to the simple Word of God is infinitely better than looking at the end which may be attained by the slightest deviation from it. Let us not owe a farthing to any living soul; and when we come here for the opening services, let us find that all has been paid."

During the day, the Building Fund was increased by £1,050, and within the next six or seven months the whole of the cost, amounting to £31,332 4s. 10d., had been made up, the money being contributed by members of almost every denomination, and coming from almost every part of the world—from Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Australasia. The erection of such a building by voluntary contributions indeed, marked an epoch in English Nonconformity, and it is not surprising that the preacher and his church officers looked upon the completion of the work, and the provision of every penny of the heavy cost, as a direct interposition of God, and a distinct mark of His approval. At the first church meeting held at the Tabernacle the preacher wrote in the church book, "I, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the least of all saints, hereby set to my seal that God is true, since He has this day fulfilled my hopes, and given according to our faith. O Lord, be Thou praised world without end, and do Thou make me more faithful and more mighty than ever! C. H. Spurgeon."

The following inscription, also in the Pastor's handwriting,

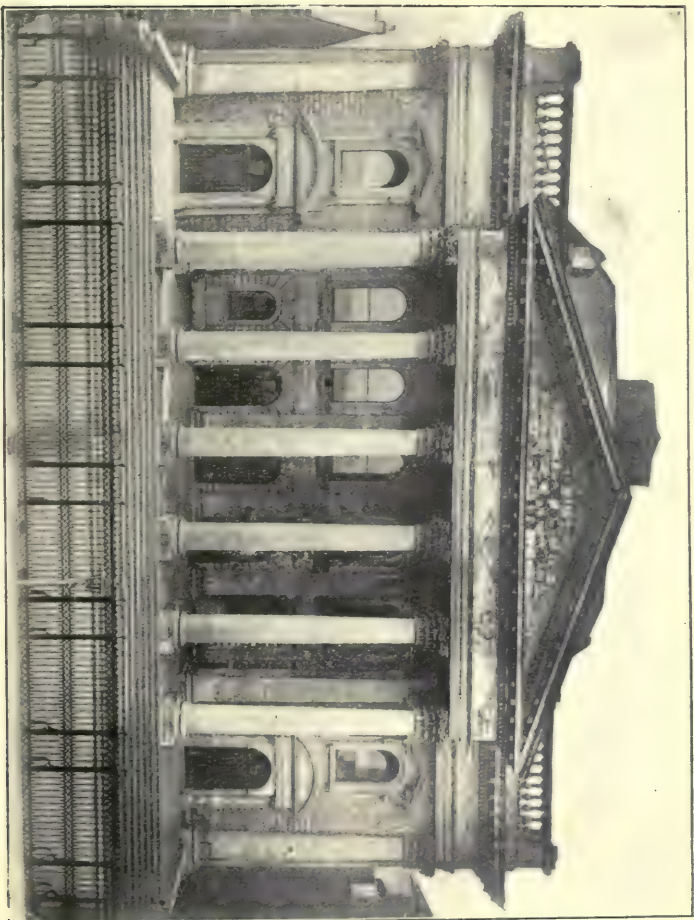
was signed by himself, the deacons, the elders, and a large number of church members, headed by Mrs. Spurgeon :

“ We, the undersigned members of the church lately worshipping in New Park Street Chapel, but now assembling in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, desire with overflowing hearts to make known and record the lovingkindness of our faithful God. We asked in faith, but our Lord has exceeded our desires, for not only was the whole sum given us, but far sooner than we had looked for it. Truly the Lord is good and worthy to be praised. We are ashamed of ourselves that we have ever doubted Him ; and we pray that, as a Church, and as individuals, we may be enabled to trust in the Lord at all times with confidence, so that in quietness we may possess our souls. In the name of our God we set up our banner. Oh, that Jehovah-Jireh may also be unto us Jehovah-shammah and Jehovah-shalom ! To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost we offer praise and thanksgiving, and we set to our seal that God is true.”

By the beginning of March, 1861, the Tabernacle was completed, and in that month the third and last sojourn of the New Park Street congregation at Exeter Hall ended. Not a single workman had been either killed or injured, a mercy for which C. H. Spurgeon and Mr. Cook, the Secretary of the Building Committee, had prayed earnestly upon their knees amid the scaffolding and bricks and mortar soon after building operations commenced. The opening services, which lasted about a month, were inaugurated with a great prayer meeting on the morning of Monday, March 18th, 1861. By seven o'clock, the hour appointed, over a thousand persons had gathered, and the fervour of the meeting will remain as a life-memory to those who had the privilege of being present. A week later, at the same early hour, another large prayer-meeting was held ; and in the

afternoon C. H. Spurgeon delivered his first sermon in the Tabernacle from the text, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts v. 42). In the evening the Rev. W. Brock, of Bloomsbury Chapel, spoke from St. Paul's words in Philippians i. 18, "Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." Two more appropriate and harmonious texts could hardly have been selected, and it is interesting to learn that neither minister knew beforehand what passage of Scripture his fellow-preacher had decided to choose for his sermon. The next night more than three thousand contributors to the Building Fund assembled in the Tabernacle under the presidency of Sir Henry Havelock; and on the following evening, the ministers and members of neighbouring churches, to the number of about four thousand, met to offer their congratulations to the Tabernacle congregation on the completion of the fine building.

The church's first Sunday at the new Tabernacle was a memorable one; and both pastor and members must have felt in a very special sense a consciousness of the Divine blessing when they remembered that the great building in which they were gathered was free of all debt, and represented the home of what, but very few years ago, was regarded as a failing cause. Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached from 2 Chronicles v. 13, 14 and vii. 1—3, and his utterance on this occasion was prophetic. "Let God send the fire of His Spirit here," he declared, "and the minister will be more and more lost in his Master. You will come to think less of the speaker and more of the truth spoken; the individual will be swamped, the words uttered will rise above everything. When you have the cloud, the man is forgotten; when you have the fire, the man is lost, and you only see his Master. Suppose the fire should come here, and the



(Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)

Master be seen more than the minister, what then? Why, this church will become two or three or four thousand strong! It is easy enough for God to double our numbers, vast though they are even now. We shall have the lecture hall beneath this platform crowded at each prayer-meeting, and we shall see in this place young men devoting themselves to God; we shall find ministers raised up and trained and sent forth to carry the sacred fire to other parts of the globe. Japan, China, and Hindustan shall have heralds of the Cross who have here had their tongues touched with the Divine flame. Through us, the whole earth shall receive benedictions; if God shall bless us, He will make us a blessing to multitudes of others. Let God but send down the fire and the biggest sinners in the neighbourhood will be converted; those who live in dens of infamy will be changed; the drunkard will forsake his cups, the swearer will repent of his blasphemy, the debauched will leave their lusts—

“‘Dry bones be raised and clothed afresh
And hearts of stone be turned to flesh.’”

Night after night there were important gatherings. On Sunday, April 7th, the first communion service was held, while on the following Tuesday the first baptisms in the new Tabernacle were conducted by C. H. Spurgeon, about twenty candidates presenting themselves. On Wednesday, April 10th, a great communion service was held, which has been described as probably the largest since the day of Pentecost. Members soon began to join the church, and on June 2nd 120 persons were received into full fellowship.

Of course, the opening of the new building was made the occasion of further slander by certain journals hostile to the preacher. A prominent Scottish paper, for instance, published an article from its London correspondent, in which

it said : " Sympathetic Aberdonians need not trouble themselves to make up any more money-boxes for Mr. Spurgeon's Tabernacle. All the debts have been paid,



(Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)

The earliest photo of the interior of the Metropolitan Tabernacle ;
taken in 1861.

and the chapel was opened on Sunday evening. As the Tabernacle is Mr. Spurgeon's own property, pew rents and all, he will probably be able to enjoy his ' privilege ' of

riding in a carriage to the end of his days. This being the case, it is sincerely to be hoped that he will now finally dissociate the work of the Gospel from the pursuit of mammon." The whole of this statement was a deliberate falsehood, as some of C. H. Spurgeon's defenders in the Press did not hesitate to declare.

For several years after the opening of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, an attempt was made to retain New Park Street Chapel with a view of its becoming the abode of another church, but it was eventually found useless to keep so large a building in such a situation, and the chapel was sold by auction. The unselfishness and entire lack of anything approaching to the mercenary spirit which characterised C. H. Spurgeon's deacons was manifested in connection with the sale of the New Park Street building. Mr. William Higgs, who had valued the property at a certain sum, was asked to attend the mart for the protection of the sale. He did so, and when the limit he had named was reached, went on himself bidding until the property was knocked down to him at a considerably enhanced figure. Later on he sold the building for £500 more than he gave for it, and going to C. H. Spurgeon handed over the whole of that sum, saying that he could not think of keeping it for himself.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CHURCH OFFICERS.

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON, like all great leaders and organizers, had the happy faculty of gathering round him men whole-heartedly devoted to the cause and causes which he made his own, and ready to stand by him through evil report and good. Particularly was this the case with his church officers. All through his remarkable career the deacons and other officials were men who had unbounded faith in their pastor's sincerity, piety and ability, and from first to last there was nothing on any single occasion approaching to unpleasantness in their relations. The very name, "the Governor," by which C. H. Spurgeon was known, was an indication of the light in which he was regarded, and yet he never took advantage of the influence which he wielded to carry things with a high hand. He looked upon the officials of the church as brethren and fellow-workers, and always consulted them upon the matters of difficulty and importance which arose during his pastorate. "My present staff of deacons," he wrote on one occasion, "consists of peculiarly lovable, active, energetic, warm-hearted, generous men, every one of whom seems specially adapted for his own particular department of service. I am very thankful that I have never been the pastor of a dead church, controlled by dead deacons. I have seen such a thing as that with my own eyes, and the sight was truly awful. I recollect very well

preaching in a chapel where the church had become exceedingly low, and somehow the very building looked like a sepulchre, though crowded that one night by those who came to hear the preacher. The singers drawled out a dirge while the members sat like mutes. I found it hard preaching; there was no 'go' in the sermon, I seemed to be driving dead horses. After the service I saw two men who, I supposed, were the deacons,—the pillars of the church,—leaning against the posts of the vestry door in a listless attitude, and I said, 'Are you the deacons of this church?' They informed me that they were the only deacons, and I remarked that I thought so. 'To myself I added that I understood, as I looked at *them*, several things which else would have been a riddle. Here was a dead church, comparable to the ship of the ancient mariner which was manned by the dead. Deacons, teachers, minister, people—all dead, and yet wearing the semblance of life. . . . All my church-officers are in a very real sense my brethren in Christ. In talking to or about one another, we have no stately modes of address. I am called 'the Governor.' I suppose because I do not attempt to govern; and the deacons are known among us as, 'Brother William,' 'Uncle Tom,' 'Dear Old Joe,' 'Prince Charlie,' 'Son of Ali,' and so on. These brethren—are some of them esquires, who ought also to be M.P.'s; but we love them too well to dignify them. One day I spoke rather sharply to one of them, and I think he deserved the rebuke I gave him; but he said to me, 'Well, that may be so; but I tell you what, sir, I would die for you any day.' 'Oh!' I replied, 'bless your heart, I am sorry I was so sharp; but still, you did deserve it, did you not?' He smiled, and said he thought he did, and there the matter ended.

"One of my deacons made a remark to me one night



(Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)

The Deacons' Vestry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

which would have mortally offended a more sensitive individual than I am. It was the first Sabbath in the month, the preaching service was over, and we were just going down to the great communion in the Tabernacle. I enquired how many new members there were to be received, and the answer was, 'Only seven.' In an instant my good friend said, 'This won't pay, Governor; running all this big place for seven new members in a month!' He was quite right, although a Christian church is not 'run' on exactly the same lines as a business undertaking; but I could not help thinking, at the time, that it would not have done for some deacons to make such an observation to certain ministers of my acquaintance, or if the remark had been made, it would have been attended with very serious consequences. I know one pastor who is very decidedly of opinion that the Lord never made anyone equal in importance to a Baptist minister (that is *himself*); but it so happened that one of his church-officers had the notion that a deacon is a being of a still higher order, so it was not very surprising that the time came when they could no longer work together harmoniously.

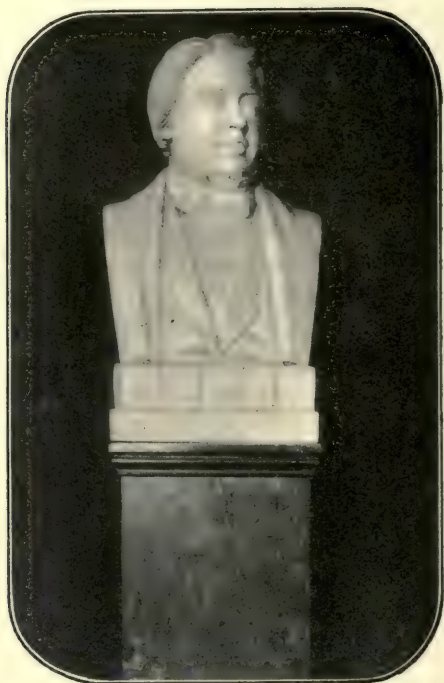
"On going into the Tabernacle one day, I gave directions about some minor alterations that I wished to have made, not knowing at the time that I was cancelling the orders given by the deacon who had the main care of the building resting upon him. When he arrived, in the evening, he saw what had been done, and at once asked who had interfered with his instructions. The reply was, 'the Governor, sir.' The spirit of unquestioning loyalty at once asserted itself over any temporary annoyance he may have felt, and he said, 'Quite right; there must be only one captain in the ship;' and for a long while that saying became one of our most familiar watchwords. I have often been amazed at

the devotion of our brethren ; I have told them, many a time, that, if they would follow a broomstick as they have followed me, the work must succeed. To which Mr. William Olney, as the spokesman for the rest has answered, ' Yes, dear Pastor ; but it is because we have such absolute confidence in your leadership that we are ready to follow you anywhere. You have never misled us yet, and we do not believe you will ever do so.' "

This love and devotion of the deacons for their minister often took a practical form. During one of his trying illnesses, C. H. Spurgeon had a sudden fit of nervousness respecting the financial affairs of his multifarious work. There was no real cause for this, but the weakness of body had brought on a condition of mental anxiety impossible to overcome, and which reacted badly upon the physical state of the invalid. One of the deacons hearing of this visited C. H. Spurgeon and sought to comfort him, but in vain. " Well, good-bye, sir," he said, " I'll see what I can do," and going straight home collected the certificates of all the stocks, shares, and available funds that he had, and brought them to the pastor's bedside. " There," he said, " I owe everything that I have in the world to you, and you are quite welcome to all I possess. Take whatever you need and do not have another moment's anxiety." Of course, as Charles Haddon Spurgeon explained, however much he had needed funds, he could never have touched the generous deacon's property, and as soon as he got better he returned all the certificates to their owner. " It seemed to me," he wrote, " very much as the water from the well of Bethlehem must have appeared to David."

The long illnesses of the pastor always drew out the keenest sympathy of his deacons, and on one occasion he remarked to them that he was afraid they would get tired of

their poor crippled minister. "Why, my dear sir," replied one, by no means noted for a demonstrative spirit, "we would sooner have you for one month in the year, than any-



Marble Bust of C. H. Spurgeon, presented to him with the pedestal and kept by him in his Vestry. The portrait was taken from life by means of plaster casts, but the preacher declared he would never undergo such an ordeal again.

one else in the world for the whole twelve months," and the others heartily endorsed his opinion.

Soon after going to New Park Street, Charles Haddon

Spurgeon suggested that in accordance with the teaching of scripture and the practice of the Primitive Church, certain brethren should be appointed to the office of elder to watch over the spiritual affairs of the church, and after due consideration a number of elders were elected. Unlike the deacons, however, whose appointment was permanent, the elders, it was decided, should be chosen year by year, and it was emphasized that their duties pertained to the spiritual affairs of the church only, and not to the temporal matters.

“My elders,” said C. H. Spurgeon, “have been a great blessing to me; they are invaluable in looking after the spiritual interests of the church. The deacons have charge of the finance, but if the elders meet with cases of poverty needing relief, we tell them to give some small sum, and then bring the case before the deacons. I was once the unseen witness of a little incident that greatly pleased me. I heard one of our elders say to a deacon, ‘I gave old Mrs. So-and-so ten shillings the other night.’ ‘That was very generous on your part,’ said the deacon. ‘Oh! but,’ exclaimed the elder, ‘I want the money from the deacons.’ So the deacon asked, ‘What office do you hold, brother?’ ‘Oh!’ he replied, ‘I see; I have gone beyond my duty as an elder, so I’ll pay the ten shillings myself; I should not like “the Governor” to hear that I had overstepped the mark.’ ‘No, no, my brother,’ said the deacon; ‘I’ll give you the money, but don’t make such a mistake another time.’

“Some of the elders have rendered great service to our own church by conducting Bible classes and taking the oversight of several of our home-mission stations, while one or two have made it their special work to ‘watch for souls’ in our great congregation, and to seek to bring to immediate decision those who appeared to be impressed under the

preaching of the Word. One brother has earned for himself the title of my hunting dog, for he is always ready to pick up the wounded birds. One Monday night at the prayer-meeting, he was sitting near me on the platform; all at once I missed him, and presently I saw him right at the other end of the building. After the meeting I asked him why he went off so suddenly, and he said that the gas just shone on the face of a woman in the congregation, and she looked so sad that he walked round and sat near her in readiness to speak to her about the Saviour after the service."

Speaking of elders, it is worth while recording a remarkable incident that happened in connection with a man whom C. H. Spurgeon had once proposed for the office of elder, but whom the other elders declared was unsuitable. The man became a disturbing influence, and often tried to annoy and offend the pastor, but without avail. At last, one Sunday when he had been unusually troublesome, C. H. Spurgeon said to him, "Brother So-and-so, will you come and see me to-morrow morning?" The man replied surlily, "I have got my living to earn, and I can't see you after five o'clock in the morning." "Oh!" said the preacher, "that will suit me very well, and I will be at your service and have a cup of coffee ready for you to-morrow morning at five o'clock." At the appointed hour C. H. Spurgeon was ready to receive the man who, for no other reason than to satisfy his irascibility, had walked several miles at that unconscionable hour to tell the pastor his latest grievance. His story was that he had lost twenty-five pounds for something which he professed to have done for the church, but which everyone else regarded as his own private speculation, and he indignantly declared that he could not afford to lose so large a sum. Thereupon C. H. Spurgeon



(Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)

The Elders' Vestry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

counted out five £5 notes and presented them to the man, who asked if they came out of the church funds. "No," replied the pastor; "I feel that you cannot afford such a loss, and though it is no concern of mine, I willingly give you the money."

"I noticed a strange look come over his face," says C. H. Spurgeon, "but he said very little more, and I prayed with him and he went away. At five o'clock in the afternoon he sent round for my brother to go to see him. When he returned, he said to me, 'Brother, you have killed that man by your kindness; he cannot live much longer. He confessed to me that he had broken up two churches before, and that he had come into the Tabernacle Church on purpose to act in the same way, and he had specially sought to put you out of temper with him,—which he never could do,—and he told me that he was a devil and not a Christian. I said to him, "My brother once proposed to have you as an elder of the church." He seemed very surprised, and asked me, "Did he really think so much of me as that?" I answered, "Yes; but the other elders said that you had such a dreadful temper that there would be no peace in their midst if you were brought in among them."'"

That evening, during the progress of the prayer-meeting, a note was passed to C. H. Spurgeon saying that the man had cut his throat. "I felt his death terribly," he said, "and the effect of it upon the people generally was much the same as when Ananias and Sapphira were slain because of their lying unto the Holy Ghost: 'Great fear came upon all the church and upon as many as heard these things.' I had often spoken of 'killing people by kindness,' but I never wished to have another instance of it in my own experience."

Soon after the opening of the Tabernacle another office

in the church was revived, that of teacher. It was found that in the early days of the Baptist Church in Southwark there had been godly men holding this post, Benjamin Keach himself being teacher under William Rider's pastorate, and



The Rev. James Spurgeon, D.D., Assistant-Pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

C. H. Spurgeon pointed out, that without dividing the unity of the pastorate, the appointment of a teacher would, in his judgment, be a valuable aid "for the edification of the

saints in the matter of Word and doctrine." A Mr. John Collins had been really doing the work of a teacher for years past, and he was, at the Pastor's suggestion, officially recognized by the title of teacher. In less than a year Mr. Collins was called to the pastorate of a Baptist Church at Southampton, and a few months later Mr. Thomas Ness became teacher at the Tabernacle. But he, too, was called to a pastorate in less than a year, so after a period of consideration, it was decided, instead of appointing another teacher, to ask the Rev. James A. Spurgeon, brother of Charles Haddon, to become assistant-pastor of the church meeting in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Certain conditions were laid down, as, for example, that the assistant-minister should not consider himself as "having any claim to occupy the pulpit, or any rights of possession such as are supposed to belong to ministers in ordinary cases," but that he should render "aid mainly in pastoral work, in visiting the sick, in seeing enquirers, in attending at church-meetings, and in such other works as naturally fall to the lot of a pastor." The invitation was accepted on January 6th, 1868, and James Spurgeon thenceforth became associated with his brother in the Tabernacle work. Charles Haddon always spoke with the greatest appreciation of his brother's helpful co-operation, which relieved him of much anxiety and left him free to give greater time to those agencies which depended so largely upon his masterly direction.

CHAPTER XXI.

NOTABLE LECTURES AND ADDRESSES.

ALTHOUGH when he delivered an address to the Young Men's Christian Association upon the subject *De Propaganda Fide*, on January 4th, 1859, Charles Haddon Spurgeon described it as his first appearance as a lecturer before any audience worthy of being called a multitude, yet he had, a year before, delivered what was really his first lecture at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall. The subject was, "A Christian's Pleasures," and every class of amusement was touched upon. Such games as chess and draughts, the lecturer thought, should not be objected to by the most precise Christian, provided they were not played for money; but with regard to the games of chance, he declared the time had now arrived when all England ought to be heartily sick of every form of gaming. "It used to be a comparatively harmless thing for ladies and gentlemen to spend all the evening over a pack of cards or a box of dice, without any money being at stake; but we have had such practical proof that the worst crimes have sprung from this apparently inoffensive practice, that every Christian mind must revolt from it. Besides, I have always felt that the rattle of the dice in the box would remind me of that game which was played by the soldiers at the foot of Christ's cross, when they cast lots for His vesture and parted His garments among them. He who sees His Saviour's blood splashed on the dice will never wish to meddle with them."

Equally emphatic was the speaker's opinion upon dancing. "Some persons ask," he said, "'What do you think about dancing?'" Well, I never hear the subject mentioned without having an uncomfortable feeling in my throat, for I remember that the first Baptist minister had his head danced off! I am sure I should have to be off my head before I should indulge in that pastime. The usual associations of the ball-room and dancing parties are of such a character that it is marvellous to me how Christians can ever be found taking pleasure in them. A safe rule to apply to all occupations is, 'Can I take the Lord Jesus Christ with me if I go there? If not, it is no place for me as one of His followers.'"

In the lecture, *De Propaganda Fide*, C. H. Spurgeon made a notable pronouncement concerning war and its influence upon heathen nations. "There is one thing I must say," he declared; "I often hear Christian men blessing God for that which I cannot but reckon as a curse. They will say, if there is a war with China, 'The bars of iron will be cut in sunder, and the gates of brass shall be opened to the Gospel.' Whenever England goes to war, many shout, 'It will open a way for the Gospel.' I cannot understand how the devil is to make a way for Christ; and what is war but an incarnate fiend, the impersonation of all that is hellish in fallen humanity? How then shall we rouse the devilry of man's nature:—

"'Cry, Havoc and let slip the dogs of war,'—

and then declare it is to make straight in the desert, a highway for our God—a highway knee-deep in gore? Do you believe it? You cannot. God does overrule evil for good; but I have never seen yet—though I look with the cautious eye of one who has no party to serve—I have never seen the

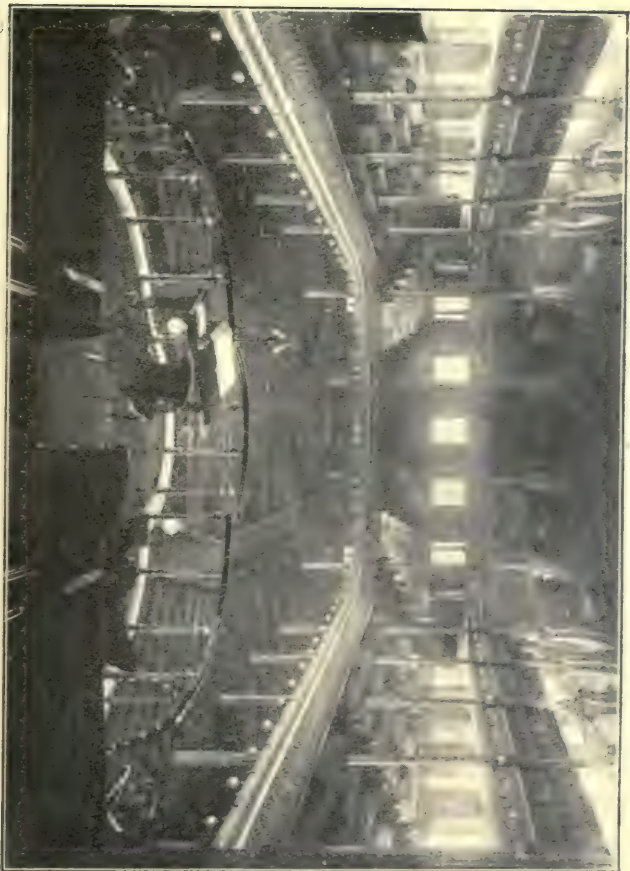
rare fruit which is said to grow upon this vine of Gomorrah. Let any other nation go to war; and it is all well and good for the English to send missionaries to the poor inhabitants of the ravaged countries. In such a case, our people did not create the devastation, so they may go there to preach; but for English cannon to make a way in Canton for an English missionary is a lie too glaring for me to believe for a moment. I cannot comprehend the Christianity which talks thus of murder and robbery. If other nations thus choose to fight, and if God lets them open the door for the Gospel, I will bless Him; but I must still weep for the slain, and exclaim against the murderers. I blush for my country when I see it committing such terrible crimes in China, for what is the opium traffic but an enormous crime? War arises out of it, and then men say that the Gospel is furthered by it. Can you see how that result is produced? Then your eye must be singularly fashioned. For my part I am in the habit of looking straight at a thing—I endeavour to judge it by the Word of God—and in this case it requires but little deliberation in order to arrive at a verdict. It seems to me that if I were a Chinaman and I saw an Englishman preaching in the street in China, I should say to him, ‘What have you got there?’ ‘I am sent to preach the Gospel to you.’ ‘The Gospel! what is that? Is it anything like opium? Does it intoxicate and blast and curse and kill?’ ‘Oh, no,’ he would say—but I do not know how he would continue his discourse; he would be staggered and confounded; he could say nothing. There is a very good story told of the Chinese that is quite to the point. ‘A missionary lately went to them with some tracts containing the ten commandments; a Mandarin read them, and then sent back a very polite message to the effect that those tracts were very good; indeed, he had never read any

laws so good as those, but there was not so much need of them in China as among the English and the French. Would the missionary have the goodness to distribute them where they were most wanted?'"

What would C. H. Spurgeon have said, had he lived to see the allied armies of Christian Europe sacking Peking and avenging the killing of missionaries who had gone to preach the Gospel of peace and goodwill?

After the building of the Tabernacle, Charles Haddon Spurgeon gave many interesting lectures of a semi-religious character there, some of which have been published and can still be obtained. The first was upon "Southwark," and was delivered in the lecture-hall three months before the completion of the building. It was the result of much labour and research, and the little booklet in which the lecture is now available, probably gives a better and more detailed account of the borough's history than any other work of moderate size that has been written.

But the lecture that created the greatest stir was that entitled, "The Gorilla and the Land he Inhabits." A stuffed specimen of the animal stood upon the platform, and the lecture, which was illustrated with coloured lantern slides, dealt largely with the recently published work of M. Paul Du Chaillu, "Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa." This volume had been the subject of much criticism, some writers even asserting that the stories about the gorilla were fabulous, and that M. Du Chaillu had never seen the creature alive, but had obtained his specimens from the natives. It is significant of C. H. Spurgeon's clear-sighted judgment that he announced in the course of his lecture as a result of a careful examination of the volume, "I do verily believe in spite of all that has been said, that M. Du Chaillu's book is matter of fact. It is not



(Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)

Interior of the first Metropolitan Tabernacle as seen from the platform

written so carefully as a scientific man might write it, nor so orderly and regularly as the author might re-write it, if he had another seven years to do it in; yet I believe that it is true, and that he himself is worthy of our praise as one of the greatest modern discoverers,—a man who has done and dared more for science, and I think I may add, more for the future spread of religion, than most men of his time.” The credibility of M. Du Chaillu’s statements was completely established some time afterwards by the researches of a French expedition which thoroughly explored the country in which he had been the pioneer traveller.

The Right Hon. A. H. Layard, M.P., took the chair at this lecture, and by his side sat M. Du Chaillu, while the Tabernacle was crowded to excess, and large numbers of people had to be turned away from the doors. In the course of the address there were many references to the Scriptures, the power and goodness of God, and the responsibility of the Christian Church to send missionaries to the newly-explored lands of equatorial Africa. Yet for some strange reason the lecturer was violently attacked in the Press. Nothing seemed too abusive to say of him, and this onslaught was perhaps the most unreasonable and offensive of all that he had to meet through his remarkable career. He was described as “The ass of the Conventicle,” “A broken-down Boanerges,” “A Merry-Andrew,” and his lectures were said to rival the comic journals. So fierce was the assault, that a friend of the preacher became nervous, and wrote expostulating with him. In reply C. H. Spurgeon sent a long letter meeting the objections *seriatim*.

“I have been dumb,” he wrote, “under the cruel rebukes of my enemies, and the ungenerous reproofs of pretended friends. I have proved hitherto the power of silence, and although most bitterly tempted, I shall not change my



C. H. Spurgeon as Great-Heart. From a cartoon published just after the Gorilla lecture. In the foreground is an artist sketching the preacher as a gorilla.

custom, or venture a syllable in order to stay these mad ravings. But your brotherly note deserves one or two words of answer.

“(1.) Have I well weighed what I have done in the matter of these lectures? Aye,—and so weighed it that neither earth nor hell can now move me from my course. I have a life-work to perform, and towards its completion, through evil report and good report, I speed my way.

“(2.) You imagine that my aim is merely to amuse, and you then speak very properly of ‘stooping.’ Indeed, if it were so, if I had no higher or nobler aim in view, it would be *stooping* with sorrowful emphasis; but, *then*, think you that the devil would care to roar at me? Why, surely, it would be his best policy to encourage me in forsaking my calling, and degrading my ministry!

“(3.) ‘Is the Master’s eye regarding His servant with pleasure?’ Yes, I solemnly feel that it is; nor am I conscious of any act, or motive,—the common infirmity of man excepted,—which could cause me to incur Divine displeasure in connection with that which is, to me, *the* work of my life.

“(4.) With regard to *laughter*,—you and I may differ upon this matter, and neither of us be quite infallible in our judgment. To me, a smile is no sin, and a laugh no crime. The Saviour, the Man of sorrows, is our example of morality, but not of misery, for He bore our griefs that we might not bear them; and I am not John the Baptist, nor a monk, nor hermit, nor an ascetic, either in theory or practice. Unhallowed mirth I hate, but I can and do enjoy my Father’s works, and the wonders of Creation, none the less, but all the more, because I am a Christian. At any rate, I hold my own views upon this point; and during eleven years of ministry, I have seen no ill effect, but very much good from

my preaching, although the charge has always been laid at my door that I sometimes provoke the risible faculties.

“(5.) Concerning ‘sowing to the flesh,’ I have *not* done so in these lectures, but have rendered honest and hearty service to my Lord, and believe that spiritual fruit has already been reaped.

“(6.) As to the grief of friends, let them, as well as myself, be ready to bear the cross; and let them not attempt to evade reproach by weeping where no tears are needed. I have given no cause to the enemy to blaspheme, or only such blessed cause as shall be renewed with greater vigour than ever.”

He then went on to explain that these lectures, which were primarily intended for the students of the Pastors’ College (although the general public were also admitted), had included English History, Sabbath-school Teaching, Ethnology, Books and Reading, Habit and Instinct, etc., and both he and the other lecturers had laboured not merely to instruct, but to do spiritual good. “My present course is upon Natural History,” he continued. “For the lectures already delivered, especially the abused ones, I have had the thanks of the members passed spontaneously and unanimously; and I believe the lectures have been as acceptable to the audience as any which were ever delivered. We who have seen the wonders of wisdom in anatomy, providential adaptation, and creating perfection, have gone home praising and blessing God. We have laughed, doubtless; and we have wept, too; but, with an audience of 150 young men, and a considerable company of men and women of the working-class, what would be the use of dull, drowsy formality? Last Friday week, the ‘Shrews’ lecture came in due course, and I thought it might be useful to give a few words as to the value of love and kindness in Christian

families, for which words I have had grateful acknowledgment. We went home, and I have not heard of one of the audience who did not feel that it was an evening well and profitably spent. Many Christian people gave me a hearty shake of the hand and glowing thanks.



"A Gorilla Lecturing on Mr. Spurgeon." From a cartoon published at the time of the Gorilla controversy.

"But, lo! to our utter amazement, one morning we discovered that the lecture was considered vulgar, coarse, and I know not what. The gentleman of the Press had nothing else just then to do, so they said, 'Let us abuse Spurgeon, no matter whether he deserves it or not.' Since this abuse,

I have asked scores who were there if anything had been said for which one might be sorry, and all have answered, 'No, nothing was said at all deserving censure, or anything but approval.' Think you that my hearers are also so degraded as to tolerate conduct such as a lying Press imputes to me? "

The letter concluded with a P.S. "Get the 'Gorilla' lecture; read it, and see if there be any evil in it; yet *it* is the *least religious* of them all."

The chairman at the "Gorilla" meeting had in the course of his remarks made use of the words: "We are now to be entertained by Mr. Spurgeon's lecture on the gorilla; but, in after ages,—according to the development theory,—we shall doubtless have a gorilla lecturing on Mr. Spurgeon;" and within a short time a cartoon was published and sold to the public representing "a gorilla lecturing on Mr. Spurgeon," the creature being shown with one arm uplifted and the other resting upon a bust of the preacher. Some wag, too, wrote the following letter to M. Blondin, who was then performing at the Crystal Palace, and he sent it on to the pastor.

"METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE,

"NEWINGTON, Oct. 5, 1861.

"M. BLONDIN,—Sir—In consequence of the over-flowing attendance at my Tabernacle on Tuesday evening last, when I gave a lecture on the gorilla, it has occurred to myself and to my brethren, the managers of the Tabernacle, that to engage your services for an evening (say next Wednesday) for the following programme, would result in mutual benefit. *You must meet me at the Tabernacle on Tuesday next, at 12 o'clock, to confirm or to alter the proposed order of entertainment, which I flatter myself will be highly gratifying to all concerned.*

"PROGRAMME.

"At 6 o'clock on Wednesday evening, October 9th, M. Blondin to ascend from the platform in the Tabernacle by an easy spiral ascent, five times round the interior to one of the upper windows opposite the Elephant and Castle, thence by an easy incline in at the first-floor window of that inn and return the same way to the platform. The admission to be as at the 'gorilla' lecture, 6d., 1s. and 2s. 6d.

"Yours sincerely,

"C. H. SPURGEON."

All the abuse and ridicule which were heaped upon the preacher had not the slightest effect in weakening his popularity. As an instance of the way in which he was beloved by the masses of the people, the following story, which, we believe, has never been told before, is significant. On March 7th, 1863, the Princess Alexandra of Denmark, destined to become the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, made her public entry into London, and the streets were thronged with sightseers. Charles Haddon Spurgeon drove into town in his closed brougham, and possibly with a view of escaping inconvenient notice, wore, what was very unusual for him, a tall hat. His carriage came to a standstill on London Bridge, owing to a block of the traffic, and here he was recognised by a working man who had often attended his services. In a moment the news spread among the people, and they thronged the carriage, giving the preacher such an ovation as even the Princess might have envied. He was cheered again and again, men and women struggled for front places to catch a glimpse of his face, and his hand was nearly wrung off and his arm almost drawn out of its socket in the enthusiasm of the delighted bystanders.

Among other notable lectures at the Tabernacle were,

"The Two Wesleys," "Sermons in Candles," and "Eccentric Preachers," all of which have been published and are so well-known that it is unnecessary more than to mention them here.

Away from home, too, C. H. Spurgeon often delighted large audiences with his racy addresses on interesting subjects. A curious incident once happened in connection with a lecture which he delivered in the City Hall, Glasgow. In the company of the Lord Provost, the speaker went to the entrance of the building, but was informed by the policeman in charge that no one without tickets could be admitted. The distinguished visitors had no tickets, so C. H. Spurgeon told the constable that his companion was the Lord Provost. The policeman said he did not know, neither did he care who the gentleman was, but if what had been said was true, he was sure no Lord Provost would wish him to disobey orders. He had his directions from the inspector to let nobody in without a ticket, and he was going to obey the rules. The Lord Provost replied, "But this is Mr. Spurgeon, and he has to deliver the lecture." "I cannot help that," rejoined the constable. "I have my orders, and he shall not come in without a ticket." Eventually, after much trouble, the visitors managed to get their cards sent to the inspector, who came out and escorted them into the hall. The preacher often used the story of his friend's and his own persistence and ultimate success as an illustration in preaching the Gospel and inviting sinners to Christ.

CHAPTER XXII.

MEMORABLE SERVICES AND SERMONS.

TO speak of all the memorable services held at the Metropolitan Tabernacle would, of course, be impossible here, but there are some which may be referred to on account of their peculiar interest or the remarkable manner in which their fame spread. The first service of unusual moment after the opening was that held on December 22nd, 1861, when Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached a wonderful sermon from the text Amos iii. 6, "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" The occasion was the death of the Prince Consort, to whose goodness and usefulness the preacher paid an eloquent tribute, at the same time praying fervently that the widowed sovereign might find the truest consolation and comfort in the God who cares for the afflicted and grief-stricken.

A few weeks later the preacher again had a sorrowful topic to refer to. There had been an accident at the Hartley Colliery, over two hundred persons losing their lives, and he took for his text on this occasion the words in Job xiv. 14, "If a man die, shall he live again?" At the close of his discourse the preacher pleaded for the widows and orphans of those who had been killed; and although the attendance was thinner than usual, owing to the evening—a Thursday—being very wet, the congregation generously gave £120 in the collection.

On Sunday morning, May 18th, 1862, Dr. Merle D'Aubigné, the historian of the Reformation, was present at the Tabernacle, and after the sermon by C. H. Spurgeon he addressed the great congregation of over six thousand persons on Christian love and unity.

But of all the sermons ever preached in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, that on "Baptismal Regeneration," delivered on Sunday morning, June 5th, 1864, undoubtedly became the most renowned. In its printed form a quarter-of-a-million copies have been sold, and it is still in great demand. Speaking of this discourse, C. H. Spurgeon said: "It was delivered with the full expectation that the sale of the sermons would receive very serious injury; in fact, I mentioned to one of the publishers that I was about to destroy it at a single blow, but that the blow must be struck, cost what it might, for the burden of the Lord lay heavy upon me, and I must deliver my soul. I deliberately counted the cost, and reckoned upon the loss of many an ardent friend and helper, and I expected the assaults of clever and angry foes. I was not mistaken in other respects; but in the matter of the sermons I was altogether out of my reckoning, for they increased greatly in sale at once. That fact was not in any degree to me a test of my action being right or wrong; I should have felt as well content in heart as I am now as to the rightness of my course had the publication ceased in consequence; but still it was satisfactory to find that, though speaking out might lose a man some friends, it secured him many others; and if it overturned his influence in one direction, it was fully compensated elsewhere. No truth is more sure than this, that the path of duty is to be followed thoroughly if peace of mind is to be enjoyed. Results are not to be looked at; we are to keep our conscience clear, come what may; and

all considerations of influence and public estimation are to be as light as feathers in the scale. In minor matters, as well as in more important concerns, I have spoken my mind fearlessly, and brought down objurgations and anathemas



A familiar pulpit attitude of C. H. Spurgeon. From a photograph taken just after the opening of the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

innumerable; but I in nowise regret it, and shall not swerve from the use of outspoken speech in the future any more than in the past. I would scorn to retain a single adherent

by such silence as would leave him under any misapprehension. After all, men love plain speech."

The text of the sermon was St. Mark xvi. 15, 16, "And



Another very common attitude of C. H. Spurgeon when preaching at the Tabernacle, taken at the same time as the photograph on the opposite page.

He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

After pointing out that the Prayer Book plainly taught baptismal regeneration, as shown by the words prepared for children, "my baptism wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven," and by the form for the administration of baptism: "Then shall the priest say, 'Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits; and with one accord make our prayers unto Him, that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning,'" the preacher went on to make the statement which led to such an outcry:

"'But,' I hear many good people exclaim, 'there are many good clergymen in the church who do not believe in baptismal regeneration!' To this my answer is prompt. 'Why, then, do they belong to a church which teaches that doctrine in the plainest terms?' I am told that many in the Church of England preach against her own teaching. I know they do, and herein I rejoice in their enlightenment, but I question, gravely question their morality. To take oath that I sincerely assent and consent to a doctrine which I do not believe, would to my conscience appear little short of perjury, if not absolute, downright perjury; but those who do so must be judged by their own Lord. For me to take money for defending what I do not believe—for me to take the money of a church, and then to preach against what are most evidently its doctrines—I say, *for me* to do this (I judge others as I would that they should judge me) for me, or for any other simple, honest man to do so, were an atrocity so great, that if I had perpetrated the deed, I should consider myself out of the pale of truthfulness, honesty, and common morality. Sirs, when I accepted the office of minister of this congregation, I looked to see what



(Photo by Mr. F. Johnson.)

The Baptistery of the first Metropolitan Tabernacle, in which nearly fifteen thousand persons were baptized.

were your articles of faith: if I had not believed them I should not have accepted your call; and when I change my opinions, rest assured that as an honest man I shall resign the office; for how could I profess one thing in your declaration of faith, and quite another thing in my own preaching? Would I accept your pay, and then stand up every Sabbath-day and talk against the doctrines of your standards? For clergymen to swear or say that they give their solemn assent and consent to what they do not believe, is one of the grossest pieces of immorality perpetrated in England, and is most pestilential in its influence, since it directly teaches men to lie whenever it seems necessary to do so in order to get a living or increase their supposed usefulness; it is, in fact, an open testimony from priestly lips that at least in ecclesiastical matters falsehood may express truth, and truth itself is a mere unimportant nonentity. I know of nothing more calculated to debauch the public mind than a want of straightforwardness in ministers; and when worldly men hear ministers denouncing the very things which their own Prayer Book teaches, they imagine that words have no meaning among ecclesiastics, and that vital differences in religion are merely a matter of tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum, and that it does not much matter what a man does believe so long as he is charitable towards other people. If baptism does regenerate people, let the fact be preached with a trumpet tongue, and let no man be ashamed of his belief in it. If this be really their creed, by all means let them have full liberty for its propagation. My brethren, those are honest churchmen in this matter who, subscribing to the Prayer Book, believe in baptismal regeneration, and preach it plainly. God forbid that we should censure those who believe that baptism saves the soul, because they adhere to

a church which teaches the same doctrine. So far they are honest men; and in England, wherever else, let them never lack a full toleration. Let us oppose their teaching by all Scriptural and intelligent means, but let us respect their courage in plainly giving us their views. I hate their



Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)
C. H. Spurgeon's pulpit chair.

doctrine, but I love their honesty; and as they speak but what they believe to be true, let them speak it out, and the more clearly the better. Out with it, sirs, be it what it may, but do let us know what you mean. For my part, I love to

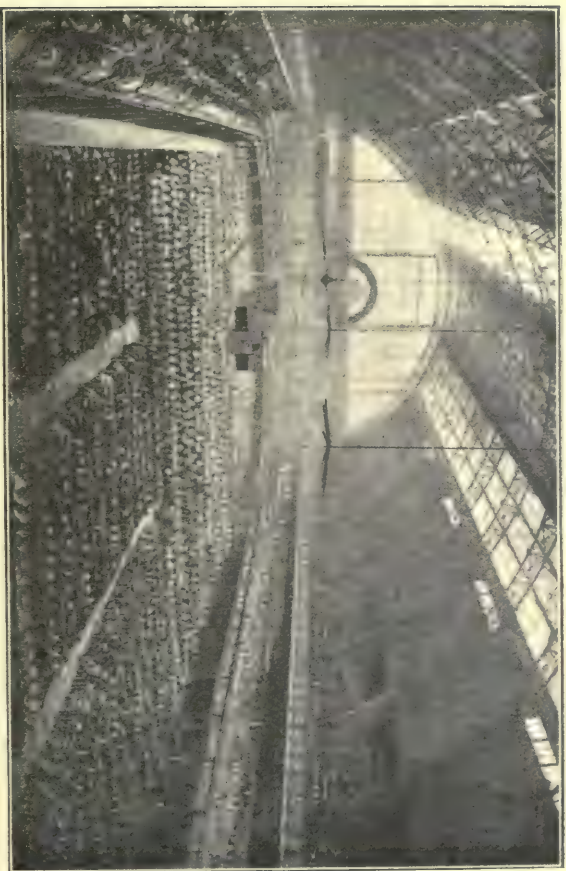
stand foot to foot with an honest foeman. To open warfare, bold and true hearts raise no objection but the ground of quarrel; it is covert enmity which we have most cause to fear, and best reason to loathe. That crafty kindness which inveigles me to sacrifice principle is the serpent in the grass—deadly to the incautious wayfarer. Where union and friendship are not cemented by truth, they are an unhallowed confederacy. It is time that there should be put an end to the flirtations of honest men with those who believe one way and swear another. If men believe baptism works regeneration, let them say so; but if they do not so believe it in their hearts, and yet subscribe, and yet more, get their livings by subscribing to words asserting it, let them find congenial associates among men who can equivocate and shuffle, for honest men will neither ask nor accept their friendship.”

Despite the vigour of this language, it is difficult at the present day to realise the extraordinary sensation which the sermon created. On all hands replies and refutations were preached and printed, a hundred and thirty-five of which were collected by C. H. Spurgeon and bound in three thick volumes. But this set was by no means complete, and it is impossible to say how many pamphlets and sermons were published as a result of that discourse on “Baptismal Regeneration” and the three supplementary sermons which the great preacher afterwards delivered. The replies and counter-replies varied in character, from the serious, refined and learned to the abusive, burlesque, and whimsical. A selection of the titles taken at random will give some idea of the variety. Among others there were: “An Exposure of the Fallacies and Misrepresentations in Mr. Spurgeon’s Sermon on ‘Baptismal Regeneration,’ in connection with his attacks on the Church of



C. H. Spurgeon as Gulliver, an adapted drawing by one of his admirers, at the time of the
Baptismal Regeneration Controversy.

England," "The Voice of the Church on Holy Baptism," "A Reply to the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon's Attack on the Doctrines of the Church of England and the Character of the Evangelical Clergy," "The Church of England Right: She and Her Clergy Vindicated," "What has Mr. Spurgeon Done? and by Whose Authority Has He Done It?" "The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon's Baptismal Critics Criticised," "The Great Gun is Sounding! Clergymen Beware; or, a Few Words Showing that Mr. C. H. Spurgeon is in the Light and the Evangelical Clergy are in the Dark," "What is to be Done with this Spurgeon?" "The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon Settled"; "Great is Diana; or, Mother Church and the Babes"; "*Re*-generation or *De*-generation; A Pill for the Parsons and a Spur for Spurgeon"; "On Which Side is Dishonesty? or a Brief Exposure of the Serious Perversion of the Words of Holy Scripture in Mr. Spurgeon's Sermon"; "The Spurgeon Antidote on Baptismal Regeneration"; "What Is It All About; or an Inquiry into the Statements of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon"; "Weighed in the Balances; the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon Self-condemned"; "Regeneration not Salvation"; "A Challenge to the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon"; "Regeneration; The Use and Abuse of a Word"; "Mr. Spurgeon Shown to be a Teacher of Baptismal Regeneration"; "The Evil Speaking and Ignorance of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon"; "The Pædo-Baptist Mode Vindicated"; "The Tables Turned; Mr. Spurgeon's Ignorance Wisdom, and His Critics' Wisdom Ignorance"; "The Divine Validity of Infant Baptism as Administered by Pouring or Sprinkling"; "Infant Baptism, Why Sneer at It?" The names of most of the writers have passed into oblivion, but there were among them many distinguished men such as Dean Goode, of Ripon; the Rev. Hugh Stowell, M.A., of Manchester; the



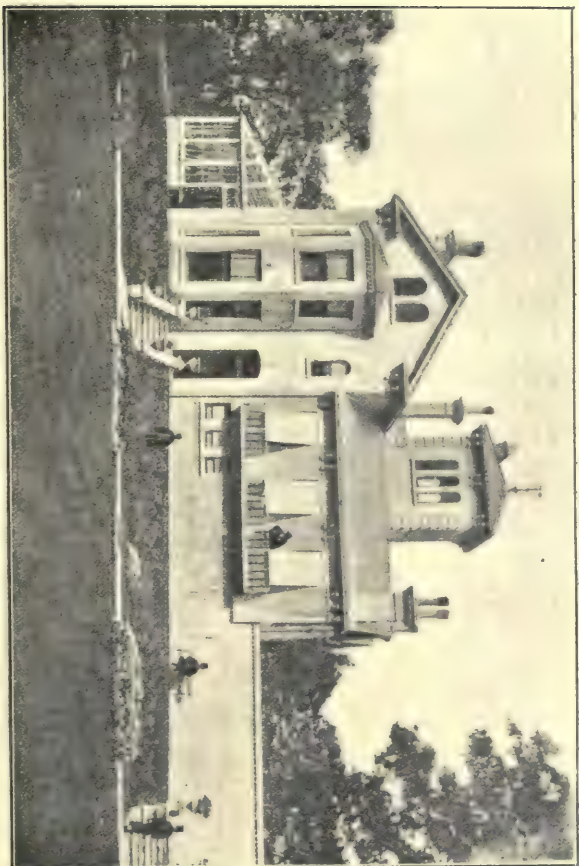
Charles Haddon Spurgeon preaching to 20,000 people in the Agricultural Hall, Islington.

Rev. Hugh Allen, D.D., and the Rev. Joseph Bardsley, M.A., on the Church of England side; and Dr. Brock, of Bloomsbury Chapel; Dr. Landels, of Regent's Park Chapel, and Dr. Haycroft, of Bristol, on the Baptist side.

One result of the controversy was that C. H. Spurgeon left the Evangelical Alliance. He had received a letter from the secretary, Mr. James Davis, strongly asserting that the only alternative open to him was either to retract or to withdraw from the Alliance; and believing the letter to be written with the authority of the committee, C. H. Spurgeon at once withdrew from membership. It transpired, however, that the secretary's action had not been authorised, and some years later the distinguished Baptist preacher rejoined the Alliance and remained a member of its Council until his death in 1892.

Early in 1867 it was found that owing to the enormous crowds which had attended it weekly, the Tabernacle building had suffered considerably from wear and tear, and it was decided to repair the interior. The great sanctuary was therefore closed, and for five Sunday mornings (March 24th to April 21st, 1867) C. H. Spurgeon preached in the Agricultural Hall, Islington, to congregations numbering not fewer than twenty thousand persons. These were the largest audiences he ever had inside a building, with the single exception of the Crystal Palace gathering on the occasion of the Fast Day service.

The increasing work of C. H. Spurgeon had long necessitated a larger residence than the old house which he inhabited in Nightingale Lane, and in 1869 the building was pulled down and a new "Helensburgh House" erected by Mr. William Higgs, the builder of the Tabernacle. This was a far more commodious and imposing building than the



Back view of the new "Helensburgh House," C. H. Spurgeon's third home after marriage.
The preacher is seen standing upon the balcony.

old house ; and when the garden had been re-arranged under the direction of Mr. Shirley Hibberd, who, among other things, laid out a new lawn where the preacher could play "the old Puritan game of bowls" with his sons and friends, the new Helensburgh House became a very comfortable home. Charles Haddon Spurgeon had never accumulated wealth. Whenever he had a spare five-pound note from the sale of his sermons and books it invariably went to help one of the numerous works carried on in connection with the Tabernacle, and the many opportunities of making money which presented themselves to him were never accepted. He had, for instance, been offered £10,000 and all expenses if he would visit America and deliver fifty lectures there, but had declined because he felt his duty to lay at home. As a mark of appreciation, therefore, a few of his liberal and devoted helpers determined to defray the principal part of the cost of the new home ; and when C. H. Spurgeon met the generous donors to thank them, he made one of the most charming little speeches that could have been uttered on such an occasion.

"It was a law of Abdul the Merciful," he said, "that no man should be compelled to speak when overwhelmed by kindness. Doth a man sing when his mouth is full of the sherbet of Shiraz, or a prince dance when he wears on his head the crown of Ali, with its hundredweight of jewels? Or, as Job saith, 'Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? Or loweth the ox over his fodder?' As he that marrieth a virgin is excused from war, so he that receiveth a great gift is exempted from a public speech. My heart is as full of thanks as Paradise was full of peace. As the banks of Lugano ring with the songs of nightingales, so my whole being reverberates with gratitude ; and there is another, for whom I may also speak, who echoes all I utter,

as the cliffs of Meringen prolong with manifold sweetness the music of the horn.

“From you,—it comes with double pleasure like the nuts and the almonds that were carried to Joseph fresh from his father’s tents. From my brethren,—it is a flower dripping with the dew of Hermon, and perfumed with the fragrance of affection. From my fellow-soldiers,—it comes as a cup of generous wine in which we pledge each other for future batties. From my children in the faith,—as a love-token such as a tender father treasures. From the church,—it is offered as a sacrifice of sweet smell acceptable unto God.

“A house,—founded in love, walled with sincerity, roofed in with generosity. Its windows are agates, its gates carbuncles. The beam out of the wall shall talk with me, and the stones shall give me sermons. I shall see your names engraven on every room; and I shall read, in a mystic handwriting, the record that your love was weighed in the balances, and was *not* found wanting.

“The time of your love. During my life;—not like the poor philosopher, who was starved to death, but who afterwards had a pillar erected in his honour. This house will be a monument of your generosity, and so it will be a double memorial.”

The speaker concluded with a remark about the fear of making too much of a minister, and added, “There is no intent on my part to rest now that I have a new house. If possible, I shall work harder than before, and preach better than ever.”

Mrs. Spurgeon, who had been staying for some time at Brighton as an invalid, came up to London in order to be present at this gathering, but immediately afterwards returned until the house was ready for its occupant. The

devotion of the husband was most touching. Despite his multifarious labours he busied himself in the purchase of new furniture so that nothing should worry his wife, and he had a room adjoining his study specially fitted up for her use. Everything was ready when she returned to London improved somewhat in health as the result of an operation performed by Sir James Simpson, of Edinburgh,



(Maull & Fox, photo, Piccadilly.)

C. H. Spurgeon in 1870.

who travelled from Scotland to Brighton twice for the purpose. The distinguished surgeon had a great regard for C. H. Spurgeon, and when asked about his fee replied, "Well, I suppose it should be a thousand guineas, and when you are Archbishop of Canterbury I shall expect you to pay it; till then let us consider it settled by love."

An incident that happened during this long and painful

illness of Mrs. Spurgeon is so remarkable that it must be recounted. In seeking to comfort her in her distress, C. H. Spurgeon often asked the question, "What can I bring you, wifey?" and one day she replied, playfully, and without any serious intent, "I should like an opal ring and a piping bullfinch." The husband looked surprised, and answered, "Ah, you know I cannot get those for you!" The strange request was made the subject of much banter for a day or two between husband and wife, and then almost passed from memory. But one Thursday evening, not long afterwards, C. H. Spurgeon, on returning from the Tabernacle, showed his wife a tiny box. This he opened, and produced therefrom a beautiful opal ring which he placed on Mrs. Spurgeon's finger. Of course she wanted to know its history, and it transpired that an old lady whom the preacher had once seen when she was lying ill, had sent a note to the Tabernacle asking that someone would call upon her to receive a small present she wished to give to Mr. Spurgeon. The preacher's private secretary visited the old lady and received from her a small parcel which was found to contain the opal ring!

This happened while Mrs. Spurgeon was in London. Soon afterwards she was removed to Brighton, and one day when her husband visited her there, he carried with him a parcel of some size. On undoing the covering, a bird-cage was disclosed containing a beautiful piping bullfinch! The lady's astonishment and joy were great, and when she heard of the strange way in which her second wish had been granted, she naturally believed that both the ring and the bird were direct love-gifts from the pitiful Father above. It appeared that the preacher had been to see a friend whose husband was dying, and after praying with the sufferer he was about to leave, when the lady said: "I want you to

take my pet bird to Mrs. Spurgeon, I would give him to none but her; his songs are too much for my poor husband in his weak state, and I know that 'Bully' will interest and



(Russell & Sons, photo, London.)

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, about 1870.

amuse Mrs. Spurgeon in her loneliness while you are so much away from her."

Of course the preacher told the lady how remarkably her

offer had, all unconsciously, fulfilled the wishes of his wife, and with him she rejoiced at this instance of God's care for His children even in comparatively trifling matters. The most sceptical must certainly own that the story is a strange one, even if they believe the succession of circumstances to have been due merely to coincidence and chance.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PASTORS' COLLEGE.

IMMEDIATELY after his advent to London, C. H. Spurgeon's activities became so manifold, and his energies were exerted in so many different directions, that it is impossible to give anything like a consecutive account of his life from that period. The strenuous career of a distinguished worker has been likened to a broad stream, ever widening as it runs its course; but in Charles Haddon Spurgeon's case, for the simile to be apt, the river must possess a vast delta with many channels, and in exploring, one is bewildered as to which channel should be followed first. Of course, the pastorate of the great church which met in the Metropolitan Tabernacle is to be regarded as the main stream of the preacher's life, but that stream had not gone far on its course before many channels, scarcely less important, branched off in different directions, and these again became the parents of other tributaries, until it seems hopeless to attempt to follow the almost endless ramifications of C. H. Spurgeon's work and ministry.

The first of the many secondary channels branching off from the main stream was the Pastors' College. This institution has had literally a world-wide influence: from it have gone forth preachers to the ends of the earth, and many of the most successful and most crowded churches in Great Britain to-day have been built up and are ministered

to by preachers trained in C. H. Spurgeon's college—his “first born and best beloved,” as he often called the institution.

Like many another Christian agency that has made its mark upon the life of the country, the Pastors' College originated in the self-denial and godly love for humanity of its founder. A young man, Thomas William Medhurst, who had been much exercised about his spiritual condition, had written to C. H. Spurgeon for help, and after some correspondence he was able to tell the preacher of his conversion through one of the latter's Thursday evening sermons. This news naturally gave great joy to C. H. Spurgeon, especially as the youth expressed his desire to be baptized and to join the church, and in the pastor's note-book, the following entry referring to the matter has been found: “Thomas William Medhurst—a very promising young man—his letters to me evince various degrees of progress in the pilgrim's road. He has been very anxious, but has now, I trust, found refuge in the Rock of Ages.”

About two months later, the young man was baptized at New Park Street Chapel, and soon afterwards was received into the church. Without delay he began preaching in the open air, his testimony being attended with marked success, but there were several precise members of New Park Street Chapel, who complained to Charles Haddon Spurgeon of what they described as the young convert's “want of education.” They even went so far as to suggest that his preaching should be stopped for fear it brought disgrace upon the cause. To satisfy these critical folk the pastor had a talk with the young man, who was quite prepared to admit that there was some truth in what was said; “but,” he added, “I must preach, sir; and I shall preach unless you cut off my head.” The words being repeated to the

disapprovers, they took them in all seriousness, and exclaimed: "Oh! you can't cut off Mr. Medhurst's head, so you must let him go on preaching."

This incident, trifling as it may seem, led to the foundation of the Pastors' College. Two persons had become members of New Park Street Chapel as a result of Mr. Medhurst's preaching, and C. H. Spurgeon suggested that he should prepare himself, educationally and otherwise, for the



Mr. T. W. Medhurst, C. H. Spurgeon's
first student.

ministry, promising to bear the expense of his tuition and support during the period of training. Mr. Medhurst was then a young man, about twenty years of age, just out of his apprenticeship, but feeling called to the ministry, he gladly agreed to C. H. Spurgeon's proposal, and went in July, 1855, to live at Bexley Heath with the Rev. C. H. Hosken, pastor of Crayford Baptist Church. That it needed something more than ordinary self-denial on the part of the young

minister of New Park Street to support his *protégé* is very clear when we remember that from his first settlement in London he had always given away a large proportion of his income, and at this period his wedding was approaching, and he needed all the money he could save towards furnishing a home. He says himself: "With a limited income it was no easy thing for a young minister to guarantee £50 a year," and the difficulty must have been greater after marriage. But his wife entered thoroughly into the spirit of the work, and, as she tells us, to find the requisite money, "planned and pinched" at home.

Mr. Medhurst progressed well with his studies. Once a week he spent several hours with C. H. Spurgeon at the latter's home, and already in 1855, the pastor of New Park Street, was anticipating the training of further students. "I have been thinking that when you are gone out into the vineyard," he wrote to Mr. Medhurst, "I must find another to be my dearly beloved Timothy just as you are"; and he forthwith commenced to get together a set of text-books and works on divinity which became the nucleus of the splendid library now in possession of the Pastors' College.

Mr. Medhurst continued to preach in the open-air while studying at Bexley Heath, and his ministrations were highly appreciated as an amusing incident proves. Charles Haddon Spurgeon went there to preach on one occasion, and after the service he overheard two old ladies discussing the sermon. "How did you like Mr. Spurgeon?" asked the first, to which her companion replied, "Oh! very well; but I should have enjoyed the service more if he hadn't imitated our dear Mr. Medhurst so much." Apparently it did not strike the old lady that there was an alternative explanation of the similarity of style. All round, the people were loud in their praises of the student-preacher, and many bore

testimony to the spiritual good they had received, so that C. H. Spurgeon felt encouraged to go on in his plan of training young men for the ministry. At the end of 1856 Mr. Medhurst preached at Kingston-on-Thames, and soon afterwards the Baptist Church at that place offered him the pastorate, an invitation which, after consultation with C. H. Spurgeon, he accepted temporarily while completing his studies. The great preacher's kindness of heart was manifested in connection with this matter, for, having arranged with the church that in addition to the amount they were to give Mr. Medhurst for his services, they should repay him (C. H. Spurgeon) the sum he was expending upon the young student's tuition, he, at the end of the first quarter, offered the cheque for this latter amount to Mr. Medhurst, saying, "That is yours; the deacons would not have given that extra if I had not put it in the way I have done." Mr. Medhurst refused to accept the money, and so C. H. Spurgeon took a second student in the person of Mr. E. J. Silverton. In the same year (1857) Mr. Medhurst went to live with the Rev. George Rogers, the gifted Congregational minister who afterwards became first Principal of the Pastors' College.

Thus began that great institution which, up to the present year (1903), has educated no fewer than 1,045 men for the ministry, the churches ministered to by them in the same period (so far as reports have been received) showing a gross increase of 253,289 church-members and a net increase of 113,091.

Private friends of Charles Haddon Spurgeon heard of his zeal in this work, and offered their assistance, so that gradually the number of students was increased until there were more than a dozen under tuition, whilst six or seven had accepted pastorates in which they were doing good

service to the Church of God. The students were accommodated in Mr. Rogers' house at Camberwell until the Metropolitan Tabernacle was completed, when they migrated thither, and met in the class-rooms beneath the



Rev. George Rogers, first principal of the
Pastors' College.

chapel. This was the period when the Pastors' College was moulded into shape, and it will be interesting to learn in C. H. Spurgeon's own words his reasons for founding such an institution on the original lines which he followed. "We

had before us," he says, "but one object, and that was, the glory of God, by the preaching of the Gospel. To preach with acceptance, men, lacking in education, need to be instructed; and therefore our institution set itself further to instruct those whom God had evidently called to preach the Gospel, but who laboured under early disadvantages. We never dreamed of making men preachers, but we desired to help those whom God had already called to be such. Hence, we laid down, as a basis, the condition that a man must, during about two years, have been engaged in preaching, and must have had some seals to his ministry, before we could entertain his application. No matter how talented or promising he might appear to be, the College could not act upon mere hopes, but must have evident marks of a Divine call, so far as human judgment can discover them. This became a main point with us, for we wanted, not men whom our tutors could make into scholars, but men whom the Lord had ordained to be preachers.

"Firmly fixing this landmark, we proceeded to sweep away every hindrance to the admission of fit men. We determined never to refuse a man on account of absolute poverty, but rather to provide him with needful lodging, board, and raiment, that he might not be hindered on that account. We also placed the literary qualifications for admission so low that even brethren who could not read have been able to enter, and have been among the most useful of our students in after days. A man of real ability as a speaker, of deep piety, and genuine faith, may be, by force of birth and circumstances, deprived of educational advantages, and yet, when helped a little, he may develop into a mighty worker for Christ; it would be a serious loss to the Church to deny such a man instruction because it was his misfortune to miss it in his youth. Our College began by

inviting men of God to her bosom, whether they were poor and illiterate, or wealthy and educated. We sought for earnest preachers, not for readers of sermons, or makers of philosophical essays. 'Have you won souls for Jesus?' was and is our leading enquiry of all applicants. 'If so, come thou with us, and we will do thee good.' If the brother has any pecuniary means, we feel that he should bear his own charges, and many have done so; but if he cannot contribute a sixpence, he is equally welcome, and is received upon the same footing in all respects. If we can but find men who love Jesus, and love the people, and will seek to bring Jesus and the people together, the College will receive two hundred of such as readily as one, and trust in God for their food; but if men of learning and wealth should come, the College will not accept them unless they prove their calling by power to deliver the truth, and by the blessing of God upon their labours. Our men seek no Collegiate degrees, or classical honours,—though many of them could readily attain them; but to preach efficiently, to get at the heart of the masses, to evangelize the poor,—this is the College ambition, this and nothing else.

"We endeavour to teach the Scriptures, but, as everybody else claims to do the same, and we wish to be known and read of all men, we say distinctly that the theology of the Pastors' College is Puritanic. We know nothing of the new *ologies*; we stand by the old ways. The improvements brought forth by what is called 'modern thought' we regard with suspicion, and believe them to be, at best, dilutions of the truth, and most of them old, rusted heresies, tinkered up again, and sent abroad with a new face put upon them, to repeat the mischief which they wrought in ages past. We are old-fashioned enough to prefer Manton to Maurice, Charnock to Robertson, and Owen to Voysey.

Both our experience and our reading of the Scriptures confirm us in the belief of the unfashionable doctrines of grace; and among us, upon those grand fundamentals, there is no uncertain sound. Young minds are not to be cast into one rigid mould, neither can maturity of doctrine be expected of beginners in the ministry; but, as a rule, our men have not only gone out from us clear and sound in the faith, but with very few exceptions they have continued so."

It was determined from the first that the students should be boarded out in twos and threes, so that they might not be dissociated from ordinary social life by living altogether, as at other colleges, and this practice has proved very successful and is continued to the present time.

The College being now located in the Tabernacle, C. H. Spurgeon brought the work and its requirements before the members of his congregation, and as a result, a church-meeting was held at which the following resolution was passed: "That this church rejoices very greatly in the labours of our pastor in training young men for the ministry, and desires that a record of his successful and laborious efforts should be entered in our church-books. Hitherto, this good work has been rather a private service for the Lord than one in which the members have had a share, but the church hereby adopts it as part of its own system of Evangelical labours, promises its pecuniary aid, and its constant and earnest prayers." A weekly offering was henceforth taken on behalf of the institution, and many generous gifts were contributed privately. The work was now extended, so that members of the church who had no intention of entering the ministry, but who desired to get a sound education, might attend classes held in the evening. A weekly lecture, too, to the students was thrown open to

the public, and the abuse which C. H. Spurgeon received as a result of this praiseworthy effort has already been referred to.

As the number of students grew larger, so the necessary funds were forthcoming. No list of guaranteed subscribers was compiled, but resort was had to prayer, and never on any single occasion did this lever fail to act. The preacher's



(Elliot & Fry, photo, London.)

Charles Haddon Spurgeon in 1873.

faith was sometimes tried severely, but the result was always well worth the trial. For instance, by the increased sale of his sermons in America, he was soon able to spend from six to eight hundred pounds upon his favourite work, but suddenly, owing to the preacher's unqualified denunciation of the then existing slavery, his sermons became unpopular in the United States, and resources from that quarter were

cut off. Many a bolder man might have quailed, but C. H. Spurgeon had faith that the work being of God could not come to nought. From his own income he devoted every penny that could be spared, and was only dissuaded from selling his brougham and horse when Mr. Rogers pointed out that such a course would in the long run be anything but wise, as a carriage was an absolute necessity to a man who went preaching all over the metropolis. The preacher was reduced to his last sovereign when a letter was received from a banker to the effect that a lady had just deposited £200 to be used by C. H. Spurgeon for the education of young men for the ministry. Some weeks later a further £100 was deposited in the same bank by another unknown friend, whilst at a dinner given by Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster to celebrate the publication of the preacher's five hundredth sermon, a sum of £500 was raised for the College. So the work went on and prospered, the supplies increasing as the need grew. On one occasion £1,000 was sent to C. H. Spurgeon by an unknown donor, and many other large sums were also received, in addition to numerous smaller gifts.

As in monetary matters so in the provision of efficient and suitable tutors the needs of the Pastors' College were always effectively met. Mr. David Gracey, a gifted scholar, who had been educated at Glasgow University, left the Presbyterian Church for the Baptist, and entering the college as a student became first its classical tutor, and after the death of Mr. Rogers, its Principal. Great help was rendered by the president's brother, the Rev. J. A. Spurgeon; whilst Mr. W. R. Selway became science lecturer, and Professor A. Fergusson English and elocution tutor. All were well qualified for their positions, and when they passed away one after the other, their losses were



(Photo by Mr. F. Johnson.)

The men's Bible-class room at the Metropolitan Tabernacle; also used as a dressing-room at baptismal services.

sorely felt, although other gifted men took their places.* Every Friday the founder and president of the College himself used to lecture to the students, a pleasure to which they looked forward keenly week by week. Many of these addresses have been published in the four volumes of "Lectures to my Students," and together they form a compendium for the aspiring preacher surpassing in common sense and sound advice anything else that has been written for a similar purpose. At intervals, too, the students had a field-day at the home of their president, and very inspiring these gatherings were to those privileged to participate in them.

It was in connection with the Pastors' College, perhaps, that C. H. Spurgeon's wit and humour had the fullest opportunity of getting play, and his anecdotes about students and would-be students and others with whom he came in contact through the College are very diverting. Some opponents described the institution as "a parson manufactory," but C. H. Spurgeon declared "it would be nearer the truth if they called me 'a parson killer,' for a goodly number of beginners have received their quietus from me." If an applicant suffered from physical defects which made it obvious he could never become a successful preacher, or if after reading his testimonials and seeing his replies to questions it was clear that he had not received a call from above, Charles Haddon Spurgeon never hesitated to refuse admission, although, except in rare instances, this would be done in the gentlest and kindest way possible. At times, however, circumstances justified a different manner of declining. On one occasion a young man came with an

* The present tutors of the Pastors' College (1903) are the Rev. Archibald McCaig, B.A., LL.D., Principal, the Rev. W. Hackney, M.A. (both former students of the College), the Rev. W. A. Gaussen, M.A., LL.B., and Mr. Josiah Richardson.

open letter from his pastor, warmly commending him to the President of the College as "a man called to the ministry"; but in another letter sent through the post, the minister told C. H. Spurgeon that the young fellow was never likely to become a preacher, and the recommendation had only been written because the candidate's father was chief deacon in the minister's church, and he feared to offend this worthy by telling him the truth. "I felt," says C. H. Spurgeon, "that it was quite unjust to put upon me the onus of refusing the young man; so when he arrived, I gave him the epistle I had received, and left him and his father to settle the matter with their pastor in the best way they could." It would be interesting to know what happened at the next meeting of that deacon and his minister.

At another time a young man sought admission who had a sort of rotary action of the jaw, and, although he was highly recommended by his pastor as "a very holy man who had been the means of bringing some to Christ," he had to be refused, for as C. H. Spurgeon said, "I could not have looked at him while he was preaching without laughter, if all the gold of Tarshish had been my reward, and in all probability nine out of ten of his hearers would have been more sensitive than myself." General physique was always regarded by the President of the College as a fair criterion whether a man was fitted for the ministry. "I feel assured," he said, "that when a man has a contracted chest with no distance between his shoulders, the all-wise Creator did not intend him habitually to preach. If He had meant him to speak, he would have given him, in some measure, breadth of chest sufficient to yield a reasonable amount of lung force. A man who can scarcely get through a sentence without pain can hardly be called to 'cry aloud and spare not.' Brethren with defective mouths and imperfect articulation are not

usually qualified to preach the Gospel. The same rule applies to brethren with no palate or an imperfect one." The great preacher once mentioned that among those whom he had had the pain of declining "on the ground that God had not given them those physical appliances which are, as the Prayer Book would put it, 'generally necessary,' " were: "A man with a big tongue which filled up his mouth and caused indistinctness, another without teeth, another who stammered, and another who could not pronounce all the alphabet."

With those men who, having failed in various other callings, turned to the ministry because they regarded their non-success as "the Lord shutting up all other doors," C. H. Spurgeon had no sympathy. "The ministry needs the very best men," he used to tell them, "not those who cannot do anything else. A man who would succeed as a preacher would probably do right well either as a grocer or a lawyer or anything else." And every minister at any rate will agree when he adds that there is scarcely anything impossible to a man who can keep a congregation together for years, and be the means of edifying them for hundreds of consecutive Sabbaths.

Perhaps the most remarkable young man who ever sought admission to the College was one who sent word into the vestry one Sunday morning that he must see the distinguished preacher at once. "His audacity admitted him," says C. H. Spurgeon, "and when he was before me, he said, 'Sir I want to enter your College, and should like to enter it at once.' 'Well, sir,' I said, 'I fear we have no room for you at present but your case shall be considered.' 'But mine is a very remarkable case, sir; you have probably never received such an application as mine before.' 'Very good, we'll see about it; the secretary will give you one of

the application papers, and you can see me on Monday.' He came on the Monday, bringing with him the questions, answered in a most extraordinary manner. As to books, he claimed to have read all ancient and modern literature, and after giving an immense list, he added, 'This is merely a



(Russell & Sons, photo, London.)

C. H. Spurgeon, from a photograph taken about 1876.

selection ; I have read most extensively in all departments.' As to his preaching, he could produce the highest testimonials, but hardly thought they would be needed, as a personal interview would convince me of his ability at once. His surprise was great when I said, 'Sir, I am obliged to

tell you that I cannot receive you.' 'Why not, sir?' 'I will tell you plainly. You are so dreadfully clever that I could not insult you by receiving you into our College, where we have none but rather ordinary men; the President, tutors, and students, are all men of moderate attainments, and you would have to condescend too much in coming among us.' He looked at me very severely, and said with dignity, 'Do you mean to say that, because I have an unusual genius, and have produced in myself a gigantic mind such as is rarely seen, I am refused admittance into your College?' 'Yes,' I replied, as calmly as I could, considering the overpowering awe which his genius inspired, 'for that very reason.' 'Then, sir, you ought to allow me a trial of my preaching abilities; select me any text you like, or suggest any subject you please, and here, in this very room, I will speak upon it, or preach upon it without deliberation, and you will be surprised.' 'No, thank you, I would rather not have the trouble of listening to you.' 'Trouble, sir! I assure you it would be the greatest possible pleasure you could have.' I said it might be, but I felt myself unworthy of the privilege, and so bade him a long farewell. The gentleman was unknown to me at the time, but he has since figured in the police court as too clever by half."

The men who were admitted to the College were, almost without exception, men worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called. There was one of the early students, however, who gave his president great cause to fear concerning his future when he commenced his petition at a prayer-meeting by saying, "O Thou that art encinctured with an auriferous zodiac," evidently a grandiloquent paraphrase of Revelation i. 13. "Alas," says C. H. Spurgeon, "my fears proved to be only too well founded; after he left the College, he went from the Baptists to the Congrega-

tionalists, then became a play-writer and play-actor; and where is he now, I do not know. For many years I had the sad privilege of helping to support his godly wife, whom he had deserted. I thank God that, among so many hundreds of men, so few have caused me such sorrow of heart as he did."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon had some amusing experiences with deacons in search of pastors. One wrote to ask him if he would send a student who could "fill the chapel." The great preacher replied that he had not one big enough as that was the people's business, but he could send a brother who would do his best to fill the pulpit and preach the Gospel faithfully. At another place a particularly able student had preached and was informed that if he had been a bigger man he would have been invited to the pastorate. C. H. Spurgeon says, "I really could not blame him when I heard that in reply to this very foolish objection he said to the deacons, 'If Mr. Spurgeon had known that you wanted bulk instead of brains, he would have sent you a bullock!'" Indifferent to personal gain himself, wherever other ministers were concerned, C. H. Spurgeon always upheld the maxim that, "The labourer is worthy of his hire." To the officers of a small country church who applied to him for a pastor, but offered a ridiculously small salary, he wrote:—"The only individual I know, who could exist on such a stipend, is the angel Gabriel. He would need neither cash nor clothes; and he could come down from Heaven every Sunday morning, and go back at night, so I advise you to invite him." Even more ironical was his reply to the deacon of another church who sent a very long list of the qualifications to be possessed by the man "whom they could look up to as their leader." C. H. Spurgeon recommended his correspondent to take a large sheet of brown paper and cut

out a minister of the size and shape desired, or else to seek to secure the services of the eminent Dr. So-and-so, who had been for a good many years in glory, for he could think of no one else who could fulfil the conditions that such an important church and diaconate seemed to regard as indispensable. The deacon wrote again in a more reasonable strain, and eventually secured a pastor from the College, whose ministry was highly appreciated.

The president's advice to his students was always pithy and had a rare vein of humour running through it. Once when Mr. T. W. Medhurst came to him and sorrowfully declared that he had been preaching for three months without hearing of a single soul being converted, C. H. Spurgeon said, "Do you expect the Lord to save souls *every* time you open your mouth?" "Oh! no sir," was the reply. "Then," rejoined the president, "that is just the reason why you have not had conversions: 'According to your faith be it unto you.'" To another student who was about to leave for his first pastorate, Charles Haddon Spurgeon said: "I want you to go under an operation before you leave. I am going to put out one of your eyes, to stop up one of your ears, and to put a muzzle on your mouth. Then you had better have a new suit of clothes before you go, and you must tell the tailor to make in the coat a pocket without a bottom. You understand my parable?" "I think so, sir," replied the student, "but should like your interpretation." "Well, there will be many things in your people that you must look at with the blind eye, and you must listen to much with the deaf ear, while you will often be tempted to say things which had better be left unsaid; then, remember the muzzle. Then all the gossip you may hear, when doing pastoral work, must be put into the bottomless pocket."



The Pastors' College building.

At another time, just before the students went away for their vacation, the president said, if he had been able to afford it, he would have given every man a present. "To you," he said to one, "I would give a corkscrew, because although you have a good deal in you, you cannot get it out." "As to you, my brother," turning to another student, "I should give you a sausage stuffer, for you need to have something put into you." A third student was to have a canister of gunpowder to be set alight exactly at the second head of his discourse to stir him up.

Many pages might be filled with similar stories and reminiscences of C. H. Spurgeon and his College students, did not more important matters call for notice. Sufficient has been told, however, to explain why the Pastors' College has always had an originality and virility which more pretentious institutions have lacked. The founder's character is impressed more or less vividly upon every man who passed through his training school and under his own immediate tuition.

For fourteen years after the opening of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the classes were held in the rooms beneath that building, but the institution grew so rapidly it became necessary to get more ample and suitable accommodation. For many years C. H. Spurgeon had been putting aside legacies and other amounts that could be spared in readiness for the time when a Pastors' College building should be erected, and on October 14th, 1873, the foundation-stone was laid. Money soon began to come in as the result of prayer. C. H. Spurgeon's own contribution amounted to several thousand pounds, a friend sent a thousand, another thousand was contributed by those present at the stone-laying, the students gave £300, and promised to raise the amount to a thousand. The following

year Messrs. Cory and Sons, of Cardiff, gave to the building-fund £1,000 worth of fully paid-up shares in their colliery company, and, about twelve months later, the president received a legacy of £5,000 for the same object, whilst still further legacies of £3,000 and £2,000 were also received. The total cost of building and furnishing was £15,000, all of which was in hand before the new college was opened, and a sufficient sum was invested to pay the rates and keep



(Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)

The Library of the Pastors' College.

the building in repair. The freehold of the ground, which was formerly a rectory-garden, had been purchased from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and C. H. Spurgeon laughingly declared that he had secured the parson's garden and was going to cultivate it for him by growing dissenters in it. When all was completed the building was solemnly dedicated to the service for which it had been erected, and in every

separate room a prayer-meeting was held, led by the president himself.

From that time the growth was greater than ever. The new building provided splendid accommodation for all the needs of the students, and when C. H. Spurgeon passed away in 1892, nearly nine hundred men had been trained for the ministry in his institution. In 1888 was formed the Pastors' College Evangelical Association, consisting of former and present students and a certain number of other ministers in sympathy with the doctrinal views of the college. This was really the yearly conferences of old and new students, held regularly since 1865, reconstituted as an outcome of the "Down-grade" controversy, which will be referred to later. There were also started in connection with the Institution a Pastors' College Society of Evangelists, a Pastors' College Missionary Association, which supports a number of workers in the foreign field, and a Loan Fund to assist in the erection of places of worship.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE STOCKWELL ORPHANAGE.

OF the many monuments left by Charles Haddon Spurgeon, that testify to his mighty trust in God and prove the efficacy of prevailing prayer, none, perhaps, has struck the popular imagination with greater force than the Stockwell Orphanage. The story of its inception, foundation, and growth is indeed a romance of faith, and in many points bears a striking resemblance to the history of the Müller Orphanage at Bristol, for the founder of which C. H. Spurgeon always entertained a lively admiration. Like those in charge of the larger institution at Bristol, the trustees of Stockwell Orphanage have from the first avoided anything in the way of organised methods of obtaining funds, relying upon God to send whatever should be needed for the maintenance of the homes and orphans. As with the College, no lists of guaranteed subscribers have ever been compiled, no paid collectors have been engaged, and the common practice of sending out pathetic appeals for help, to the public at large, has always been studiously avoided. At the very beginning C. H. Spurgeon referred to the wondrous way in which the funds for the building of the Tabernacle had been provided, and added : "Mark you, it will be so in the erection of this Orphan Home. We shall see greater things than these if only our faith will precede our sight. But if we go upon the old custom of our general societies, and first look out for a regular income, and get

our subscribers and send round our collectors and pay our percentages—that is, do not trust God but trust our subscribers—if we go by that rule we shall see very little, and have no room for believing. But if we shall just trust God and believe that He never did leave a work that He put upon us, and never sets us to do a thing without meaning to help us through with it, we shall soon see that the God of Israel still lives and that His arm is not shortened.” This was no mere enunciation of a theory, but what Charles Haddon Spurgeon then declared he constantly put into practice. When funds ran short he first of all gave every penny he, himself, could spare; then if more money were needed, his co-trustees were asked to do the same, and with the generosity and faithful stewardship which invariably characterized them, they willingly followed their leader’s example. The end of the Orphanage’s resources was now reached and prayer was resorted to. Faith never failed, and many remarkable instances of Divine interposition were experienced. On one occasion C. H. Spurgeon was dining with some friends in London and the subject of the new Orphanage was being discussed. The preacher mentioned that although the money was not in hand, in a day or two the builder would require payment; but he declared his confidence that God would provide, so that no debt should be incurred. As the meal ended, a servant entered with a telegram, and this, on being opened, was found to announce that an unknown donor had just handed in a thousand pounds for the Orphanage. On another occasion when the funds were completely exhausted, the Orphanage authorities met specially for prayer to God that He would send needed help, and at once gifts began to pour in so that on that very day, sums amounting to nearly four hundred pounds were received. Not only was C. H. Spurgeon himself a man of



A bird's-eye view of the Stockwell Orphanage as it appears to-day.

faith, but the friends and colleagues he gathered round him in connection with the Orphanage were men like-minded, and to this day the same methods are followed with the same wonderful results.

Although an article by Charles Haddon Spurgeon in *The Sword and the Trowel* was the immediate instrument that led to the establishment of the Stockwell Orphanage, it is perhaps not incorrect to say that the real beginning of that institution was a prayer-meeting. At one of the usual Monday evening services at the Tabernacle the pastor had in the course of a short address made use of the words: "We are a huge Church, and should be doing more for the Lord in this great city. I want us to-night to ask Him to send us some new work; and if we need money to carry it on, let us pray that the means may also be sent."

Some time before this, Mrs. Hillyard, the widow of a clergyman, then in fellowship with the Brethren, had determined to devote her wealth, amounting to £20,000, to the service of God, and had been advised by a friend, whose aid she sought, to put this money into the hands of C. H. Spurgeon, as a man of integrity, who would use it aright. Mrs. Hillyard's income had not been a large one, but she had accumulated the considerable sum mentioned by dint of living simply and saving all she could for some good purpose. After the advice given by her friend—a Congregational Minister of Brixton—who had no other motive in recommending C. H. Spurgeon than to suggest a thoroughly suitable administrator, a copy of *The Sword and the Trowel* came into Mrs. Hillyard's hands. This happened to be a number containing an article by the editor, in which he urged the importance of training children in "the fear of the Lord," and advocated the establishment of schools where "all that we believe and hold dear shall be taught to the

children of our poorer adherents." This suggestion appealed with great force to Mrs. Hillyard, who had long felt a special sympathy with fatherless boys, and believing herself to be the subject of Divine guidance, she at once wrote to Charles Haddon Spurgeon, telling him of her desire to aid in establishing an orphanage, and requesting his assistance. This letter reached the preacher only a few days after the prayer-meeting at which he had asked God to send some new work, and if necessary, the money to carry it on. No wonder then that C. H. Spurgeon looked upon the proposal of Mrs. Hillyard as a direct answer to that prayer. In reply to a request for further particulars, the lady wrote, saying: "That which the Lord has laid upon my heart at present, is the great need there is of an orphan house, requiring neither votes nor patronage and especially one conducted upon simple Gospel principles." She went on to say: "I have now about £20,000, which I should like (God willing) to devote to the training and education of a few orphan boys. Of course, bringing the little ones to Jesus is my first and chief desire. I doubt not that many dear Christians would like to help in a work of this kind, under your direction and control; and should such an institution grow to any large extent, I feel sure there would be no cause to fear the want of means to meet the needs of the dear orphans, for have they not a rich Father?"

Mrs. Hillyard made an appointment to see C. H. Spurgeon, and the preacher took with him Mr. William Higgs, one of his trusted deacons. He found the lady's house to be one of modest dimensions, and for fear that there had been some mistake he said to Mrs. Hillyard, when shown into her presence: "We have called, Madam, about the £200 you mentioned in your letter." "£200, did I write?" asked the lady. "I meant £20,000." "Oh, yes!" replied C. H.

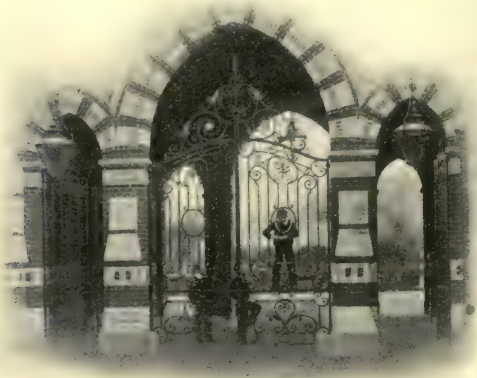
Spurgeon, "you did put £20,000; but I was not sure whether a nought or two had slipped in by mistake, and thought I would be on the safe side."

The whole matter was then discussed at length, and it is characteristic of the singleness of purpose of the great preacher that so far from grasping at this opportunity of becoming an important administrator of considerable wealth, he took pains to learn whether or not the money ought to go to some relative, and finding that everything was clear that way, he suggested that Mrs. Hillyard should present her gift to George Müller, of Bristol. But her desire was that C. H. Spurgeon himself should be entrusted with its use, believing, as he also did, that the manner of their coming together had been Divinely arranged, and a proof that the contemplated step was the right one. This notable interview is commemorated in a stained-glass window, portraying the scene, which has been placed at one end of the Board-room of the Orphanage.

These events had taken place in August and September, 1866, and a preliminary notice was soon afterwards inserted in *The Sword and the Trowel*. But it was not until January of the following year that the actual work of founding the Orphanage commenced with the purchase of a very good site, two and a half acres in extent, lying back a little from the Clapham Road. Building operations would have commenced at once, but owing to a panic in the financial market, it was found difficult to realise the securities of Mrs. Hillyard's gift, and so the trustees determined to wait awhile. This apparent difficulty proved in the end to be really a blessing in disguise, for it led to the Orphanage retaining a far more considerable endowment than probably would have been the case; while the money for building was, in answer to prayer, soon forthcoming from other sources.

The scheme of the Orphanage, in C. H. Spurgeon's words, "proposed to do away with all voting and canvassing, with the wasteful expenditure necessitated thereby, and also to form the orphans into large families instead of massing them together on the workhouse system." This latter idea was very helpful in the raising of funds, for many donors each gave a sum sufficient to build one house, while the smaller gifts of less wealthy sympathisers provided the means to build the dining-hall and other common rooms. By August, 1867, a considerable sum had been given towards the erection of the Orphanage buildings. Mr. George Moore, of Bow Churchyard, was the first large contributor with £250; then Mrs. Tyson, a lady who afterwards in her will left £25,000 to the Orphanage, gave £500 to build a house. As this was a silver-wedding gift from her husband it was decided that the house should be called "Silver-wedding House." A merchant next provided £600 for a "Merchant's House," and Mr. William Higgs and his workmen promised to build a "Workmen's House," while Mr. Thomas Olney and his sons agreed to provide "Unity House," in memory of Mrs. Unity Olney. The first stones of these houses were laid on September 9th, 1867, by C. H. Spurgeon, Mrs. Hillyard, Mr. W. Higgs, and Mr. Thomas Olney respectively. Other gifts poured in. On one occasion when he was preaching in the open-air an unknown lady put an envelope into C. H. Spurgeon's hand, which on being opened was found to contain £20 for the Pastors' College and £20 for the Orphanage. In January, 1868, the gift of £1,000 from the anonymous donor already referred to was received and the same friend in the following March again sent an anonymous contribution, with a letter in which he said: "I have this day dropped into your letter-box an envelope containing two bank-notes (£2,000). one of

which is for the College and the remaining £1,000 to help complete the Orphanage. The latter led me to contribute to the former. I am a stranger to you, but not to your sermons (printed)." Charles Haddon Spurgeon looked upon this as a most distinct and startling rebuke to his fears that the Orphanage might impoverish the College. Exactly the opposite had happened, and the College had substantially benefited by the Orphanage. In June, 1868, the



The inner entrance gates of the Stockwell Orphanage.

Baptist Churches of the United Kingdom presented £1,200 (afterwards made up to £1,765) as a testimonial to C. H. Spurgeon for the erection of two houses at the Orphanage. These were called "Testimonial Houses."

So the good work went on. A "Sunday School House" was given by the Tabernacle Sunday School, and a "Student's House" by the ministers trained in the Pastors' College, and by the end of 1869 all the buildings had been

completed, and their cost, amounting to £10,200, paid in full.*

But Charles Haddon Spurgeon and his co-trustees did not wait until the Orphanage was built before they sought out the orphans. In July, 1867, a Christian woman had been engaged to receive into her house the first six boys until the Orphanage buildings were ready, and the cost of maintenance was generously provided by Mrs. Hillyard, who sold her plate in order to make a further gift to the work. As the building operations progressed some anxiety began to be felt as to who should have charge of the Orphanage. There had been many applicants for the post of headmaster, but none had seemed to fulfil all the requirements needed for so responsible and difficult a post. At last, an apparently suitable man presented himself, and was elected to the office, but at the eleventh hour he declined to fulfil his engagement. And now C. H. Spurgeon had another of those remarkable overrulings of God which were so manifest throughout his life. It was at the very moment when the letter of refusal was in his hands, that the Rev. Vernon J. Charlesworth, assistant Minister to the Rev. Newman Hall at Surrey Chapel, called upon Charles Haddon Spurgeon. The visitor had been deeply interested in the foundation of the new Orphanage, and to a request that he would become headmaster, he assented. Never was there a more marked case of the right man for the right place. Mr. Charlesworth, who still has control of the Orphanage, has all along been one of the most earnest workers on behalf of the fatherless children, to whom he has, indeed, become a second father. His love for them has been that of a parent, and every succeeding batch of children has cherished for him an affection that has lasted far beyond school days. An able organiser and administrator, he possessed all the qualifica-

tions necessary for one who was to take complete control of a large institution, and C. H. Spurgeon many times expressed his intense pleasure and satisfaction at securing Mr. Charlesworth's services. From first to last the relations between the two men were of the most cordial character. On one occasion, however, the trustees were somewhat



(William Whiteley, Ltd., ph to, London.)

The Rev. Vernon J. Charlesworth, headmaster
of Stockwell Orphanage.

perplexed when Charles Haddon Spurgeon announced that he wished to call their attention to the fact that the headmaster had introduced a child into the Orphanage without the permission of the Managers, and added that it was not the first time such a thing had happened. The trustees looked serious, and one

of their number proposed that Mr. Charlesworth should be called in and asked for an explanation, and that he should be told that such a proceeding must not be repeated. This, however, was not necessary. The whole matter was a little joke of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's, who explained that he merely referred to a recent addition to Mr. Charlesworth's own family!

There has never been any lack of means to carry on the work of the Orphanage, for, although at times little or no money has been in hand, gifts have soon poured in as the result of earnest prayer. At the end of 1869, C. H. Spurgeon was laid low by an attack of smallpox, and some friends feared for the orphans on account of the temporary retirement of their great advocate. But the sick preacher, in the midst of his weakness, prayed for them, and within a few hours somebody, knowing nothing of the illness, called and left £500 for the Orphanage. A day or two afterwards another donor sent £1,000.

Many gifts in kind, too, were received, a ladies' school, for example, sending, in the course of a few years, 2,590 shirts for the boys, while for years Mr. James Toller, of Waterbeach, gave the produce of an acre of land to the Orphanage, an example worthy of emulation by other farmers. At one time—in 1873—when all bills had been paid, a sum of only £3 was left in hand—with 220 boys to feed. As C. H. Spurgeon wrote soon after, it was that condition of things that tested one's faith in the promise inscribed on one of the pillars of the gateway: "The Lord will Provide." On May 8th of the following year (1874) the funds ran completely dry, but prayer again proved wonderfully effectual. The trustees met specially to plead with God for supplies, and, as already mentioned, on that very day sums amounting to nearly £400 were received. Nearly a



The boys' side of the Stockwell Orphanage.

year later, the funds were again almost exhausted. "Our 230 boys persist in eating and wearing out their clothes," wrote C. H. Spurgeon, "or we would not even mention the matter of failing funds, but appetites are stubborn things and our boys have double-barrelled ones." Six months afterwards a sum of £10,000 was sent to the pastor, the largest amount save one that had been entrusted to his care up to that time. Half of this amount was for the Orphanage, and was invested according to the practice usually followed in connection with legacies. Two months later again £1,158 came from friends at Reading, where a very successful bazaar had been held in aid of the Orphanage. Thus the story continues. Sometimes the funds would be all but exhausted, but in answer to prayer, money would pour in, so that the children were never without the things they needed. The Stockwell Orphanage was, and is, indeed an object-lesson to the sceptic and the man of little faith.

Something must be said, before passing, with regard to the method of conducting the Orphanage. As Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote early in the history of the institution, "Children need something more than a roof and four walls to shelter them; they want a home where the virtues of a Christian character shall be fostered and developed. To ignore social instincts and filial reverence by massing hundreds of children together in one huge building is to incur a grave responsibility, if not to provoke a failure, fraught with most lamentable consequences. On the other hand, when an institution is adapted as far as possible to compensate the loss of parental influence and control, one of the essential elements of success is secured." And so each house, or villa, became a home, with an unusually large family it is true, but nevertheless a self-contained home, having a Christian "mother" or matron, at its head. The

meals, however, have always been taken by the boys in a common hall for the sake of convenience and economy. Every morning family prayers are conducted before the duties of the day commence.

Then, with regard to dress, C. H. Spurgeon was very emphatic in his opinion that orphan children should not



A typical group of Stockwell Orphanage boys.

wear a uniform, marking them as the recipients of charity. "Orphanhood," he wrote, "is a child's misfortune, and he should not be treated as though it were his fault. In a garb which is a symbol of dependence it is difficult, if not impossible, for an orphan to preserve a feeling of self-respect; and we wish the older institutions were free to

break through the traditions which have so little to be said in their favour." The children at Stockwell Orphanage wear the ordinary dress of the day, no two being attired exactly alike as to the cloth. Out in the street, they would strike no one as charity children, and their invariably happy faces testify unmistakably to the pleasant lives they lead.

The boys are given a good English education, which fits them for commercial positions, and many are now occupying places of trust and importance in large business establishments. In all the examinations for which they have entered the Stockwell Orphanage children have done well. Two Government inspectors who went over the institution in 1873 described it in their report as "an admirable institution; good in design, and, if possible, better in execution"; while Dr. Henry Gervis, of St. Thomas' Hospital, at the same time wrote, "I cannot speak too highly of all the arrangements and of the admirable manner in which the institution is conducted." At the same time the Stockwell Orphanage has always been most economically managed.

With regard to the religious arrangements at Stockwell, C. H. Spurgeon was determined that the institution should be strictly Christian but non-sectarian, and open to all classes of the community. Neither the station in life of the parents nor the religious denomination has ever been allowed to influence the counsels of the Committee, which treats every case submitted entirely on its merits, the vacancies that may occur in the homes being filled by the most necessitous cases. The appointment of Mr. Charlesworth—a Congregational minister at the time—as headmaster was proof that the Orphanage was no mere institution of the Baptist denomination, and if further testimony to this fact were needed, it could be found by a glance at

the table setting forth the religious persuasions of the parents of orphans admitted into the homes. In the last report during C. H. Spurgeon's lifetime (1891), these were given as follows:—Church of England, 609; Baptist, 415; Congregational, 168; Wesleyan, 143; Presbyterian, 28; Brethren, 12; Roman Catholic, 3; Moravian, 2; Bible Christian, 3; Society of Friends, 2; Salvation Army, 1;



The infirmary at Stockwell Orphanage.

not specified, 200.* These came from all parts of the United Kingdom, though the larger proportion belonged to London.

* In the most recent report issued, that for 1901—1902, the figures stand thus:—Church of England, 965; Baptist, 635; Congregational, 243; Wesleyan, 189; Presbyterian, 36; Brethren, 25; Bible Christian, 6; Moravian and Lutheran, 5; Society of Friends, 4; Roman Catholic, 4; Salvation Army, 4; not specified, 307.

On Sunday mornings detachments of the children have always attended the Metropolitan Tabernacle and neighbouring chapels, whilst in the afternoons, under the direction of Mr. W. J. Evans, a local resident, who has acted as Superintendent for over thirty years, a band of Sunday-school teachers from local churches visit the Orphanage and take classes of the children. Every Wednesday a week-night service is held and in addition there is a Young Christians' Band, with monthly meetings, a Band of Hope, and a branch of the International Bible-Reading Association.

A remarkable feature of the conduct of the Orphanage is the fact that every year a comparatively large sum has been obtained by the lads themselves towards the funds. Under the able direction of Mr. Charlesworth, a band of choir-boys and hand-bell ringers has annually visited various towns and given services of song, the collections among the congregations being given to the Orphanage. In 1884, for instance, after all travelling and other expenses had been paid, £1,132 18s. 6d. was realised in this way.

The girls' wing of the Orphanage was founded in 1879 by a gift of £50 from Mrs. Hillyard, to which C. H. Spurgeon added another £50 from the testimonial presented to him on the occasion of the celebration of his pastoral silver-wedding, and a third £50 was given by Mr. T. D. Galpin. The story of how the necessary funds for the girls' homes were provided is almost identical with that of the boys'. First of all a large house with grounds adjoining the existing Orphanage was purchased for £4,000, but as the day for payment drew near—July 15th, 1879—the necessary sum was not in hand. Here again was witnessed one of those remarkable interpositions of Providence so frequent in the life of C. H. Spurgeon.

36c LIFE OF CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON.

It was suddenly discovered that the date of payment fell fifteen days later than was expected, and on the very morning of July 30th, when the money was to be made over, a letter was received announcing that a gentleman who had recently died had left £1,500 for the girls' Orphanage, bringing up the amount in hand to within a small sum of



(C. F. Treble, photo, Brixton.)

Mr. F. G. Ladds, Secretary of the Stockwell Orphanage. He was formerly an inmate of the Orphanage, and has held his present post for twenty-four years.

the £4,000 required. Then, one after another, friends came forward with donations for the building of the various girls' houses, and by 1882 the entire Orphanage, covering more than four acres, and providing accommodation for

250 boys and 250 girls, was completed; forming an ideal institution for fatherless children.

The conduct of the girls' homes is very similar to that of the boys', the most notable difference being that the girls, instead of taking their meals in a common hall, dine in their several houses.

To the time of his death Charles Haddon Spurgeon



The girls' side of the Stockwell Orphanage.

kept a place very near his heart for the orphans, and even in the midst of sickness, when away in the South of France, he always wrote a letter to the boys and girls at such periods as Christmas, or when any special occasion called for a communication from him. One such letter is worth quoting. It was written at Mentone on January 24th, 1874, after a lad had died in the Orphanage: "Dear Boys,

I have been much impressed by hearing that death has been to the Orphanage. Are you all prepared if he should shoot another arrow into one of the houses and lay another low? I wonder who will be the next! Dear boys, would you go to Heaven if you were now at once to die? Wait a bit and let each one answer for himself. You know you must be born again; you must repent of sin; you must believe in Jesus. How is it with you? If you are not saved you are in great danger, in fearful peril! Be warned, I pray you! I cannot bear to think of one boy going from the Orphanage to hell; that would be terrible indeed. But to rise to Heaven, to be with Jesus for ever; why, this makes it worth while even to die a hundred deaths.

"I hope my dear friend, Mr. Charlesworth, and all the teachers and matrons and nurses are well; I send them all my kindest regards. I often think about you all. I want to see you all happy here and hereafter. May you grow up to be honourable Christian men; and if God should take any of you away, may we all meet in Heaven! Will you pray a special prayer, just now, that the death of one boy may bring all of you to Jesus to find eternal life? Be diligent in school, be very kind in the houses. Do not cause us pain, but give us all joy, for we all love you, and desire your good.

"Mr. Charlesworth will, on my behalf, give you a couple of oranges all round, and I will pay him when I come home. Your loving friend,

C. H. SPURGEON."

Whenever the great preacher visited the Orphanage, he was at once surrounded by the children, who loved him dearly. His hand was extended to one and all, and in describing the way the little ones thronged him, he often used the words of the Psalmist, "They compassed me about like bees." At the conclusion of such visits C. H.



The C. H. Spurgeon Memorial at Stockwell Orphanage, sculptured in terra-cotta by George Tinworth.

Spurgeon usually left sufficient money with the headmaster to provide a penny apiece for all the orphans. After the great preacher's death it was ascertained that every one of the five hundred children then in the Orphanage had, at some time or other, shaken hands with him.

To speak of the good wrought by the Orphanage is of course superfluous, so self-evident are the results. Something more is done for the boys and girls than the mere feeding and clothing of their bodies and the provision of a start in life; they are diligently trained in soul and mind, and not the least pleasing result of this is the gratitude which the old boys and girls manifest when they become wage-earners. Many gifts of money are received from them as tokens of their appreciation of what was done for them, and of their desire to see other orphans equally benefited. The Orphanage is still conducted with the same ability as in C. H. Spurgeon's day by Mr. Charlesworth and a splendid staff of workers.*

* According to the last report issued, that for 1901-2, the total number of children which had been in the Orphanage since its founding was 2,423, the inmates at that time numbering 446.

CHAPTER XXV.

OTHER INSTITUTIONS.

ALTHOUGH the Pastors' College and the Stockwell Orphanage are the largest of the institutions which owe their origin to Charles Haddon Spurgeon's ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, there are others, scarcely less important though perhaps not so well known to the people at large, which must be referred to here. In August, 1866, an article appeared in *The Sword and the Trowel* from the great preacher's own pen, in which he urged the necessity of combating error, then advancing with such rapid strides in the land, and suggesting as one of the best means possible, the distribution of wholesome Christian literature. A member of the Tabernacle congregation, Mr. E. Boustead, at once came forward and offered substantial monetary support for the establishment of a society of colporteurs. C. H. Spurgeon was delighted at this speedy response to his suggestion, and on September 3rd, at a meeting of friends whom he had called together to discuss the matter, it was decided to form an association "to extend the circulation of the Scriptures, and to increase the diffusion of sound religious literature, in order to counteract the evils arising from the perusal of works of a decided Romish tendency." Thus was the Metropolitan Tabernacle Colportage Association started. It had been intended originally to conduct the society upon Baptist lines, but as the work grew this was found to be

inadvisable, and the ranks of the colporteurs have included members of various denominations, it only being required of them that they should be men of sterling Christian character, holding firmly the great evangelical doctrines. Most of the colporteurs have been earnest and acceptable preachers, and C. H. Spurgeon described their work as "one of the cheapest and most effective means of scattering Gospel light in the darkest places," for by the profit on their sales, they obtain a considerable sum towards their own support, and Christian friends in each of the various districts where they work guarantee a subscription of £40 or £45 a year, thus relieving the central office of much financial responsibility and care. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, to the time of his death, liberally supported the Association with both purse and pen. "I believe it to be one of the most efficient and economical agencies in existence," he wrote; "and as education increases, it will be more and more so. The sale of vicious literature can only be met by the distribution of good books; these can best be scattered in rural districts by carrying them to the houses of the people; and even in towns, the book-hawkers' work greatly stimulates their sale. The colporteur not only endeavours to sell the books, but he visits from door to door; and, in so doing, converses with the inmates about their souls, prays with the sick, and leaves a tract at each cottage. He is frequently able to hold prayer-meetings, open-air services and Bible readings. He gets a room, if possible, and preaches; founds Bands of Hope, and makes himself generally useful in the cause of religion and temperance. He is, in fact, at first a missionary, then a preacher, and by-and-by, in the truest sense, a pastor. We have some noble men in the work."

The headquarters and central depot of the Association



The depot of the Metropolitan Tabernacle Colportage Association in the Pastors' College building.

are situated in a room of the Pastors' College, and the annual conferences of colporteurs, which C. H. Spurgeon always had much satisfaction in attending, are held at the Stockwell Orphanage. Mr. Stephen Wigney has for many years been the Secretary.*

No branch of Christian responsibility missed C. H. Spurgeon's attention. For "the poor of the flock" he was very solicitous, and this solicitude, as usual, took a practical turn. During Dr. Rippon's pastorate six almshouses had been founded for aged females, and did good service for a long time. But after the church removed from New Park Street to the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the necessity was realized of moving the almshouses also, so that the inmates might be able to attend the new sanctuary. A site was purchased in Station Road, Walworth, and in 1867, with the money obtained from the sale of the old buildings, together with £1,750 added by friends at the solicitation of C. H. Spurgeon, a new block of buildings, consisting of seventeen almshouses, with premises for a day school accommodating four hundred children, and a head-master's house, was erected. Later on the great preacher himself gave five thousand pounds as an endowment for the almshouses, so that his successors might never find the institution an intolerable burden. The inmates have to be aged and needy members of the church, and the Metropolitan Tabernacle has thus become unique among Nonconformist places of worship, in the extensive accommodation which it provides for its indigent communicants.

* The report for 1902 shows that during the year 55 colporteurs were at work in different parts of England and Wales and one in Ireland. The visits to the homes of the people numbered 268,769, and 509,307 separate articles were sold, including 11,000 Bibles and Testaments. In addition 60,000 tracts were freely distributed. Of Gospel addresses 6,141 were delivered, giving an average of two or three each week for every colporteur.



The Metropolitan Tabernacle Almshouses, rebuilt and increased in number
by C. H. Spurgeon.

Another valuable agency for good in which C. H. Spurgeon always took the deepest interest, which he helped to support financially, and which, with his wife, he was instrumental in starting, was "Mrs. Spurgeon's Book Fund," an institution having for its object the supply of necessary theological works to poor pastors unable to buy them. The launching of this work was a typical instance of prompt action on the part of the preacher and his wife, and it is safe to say that not many women, constantly suffering as did Mrs. Spurgeon, would have had the energy and zeal to devote themselves so entirely to this labour of love as she has done.

In the summer of 1875, Charles Haddon Spurgeon completed the first volume of his "Lectures to Students," and handing a proof copy to his wife, asked her what she thought of the book. After reading it Mrs. Spurgeon declared that she wished she could place a copy in the hands of every minister in England. "Then why not do so?" rejoined her husband without a moment's hesitation. "How much will you give?" The lady was not prepared for such a practical acceptance of her words, but she determined to think over the matter and see if some means could not be devised of carrying her desire into effect. Then suddenly the thought came to her that the needed money was ready and waiting. A curious fancy had led her for some time past to put away in a drawer every crown piece that came into her hands, and counting these coins she found the amount would exactly cover the cost of sending out a hundred copies of the "Lectures." "In that moment," she tells us, "though I knew it not, the Book Fund was inaugurated."

A note was published in *The Sword and the Trowel* for July, 1875, stating that a copy of the recently-issued

"Lectures" would be sent free of cost to each of a hundred poor Baptist ministers, but the demand was so great that Mrs. Spurgeon felt bound to give an additional hundred copies. Her husband, in the next number of his magazine, set forth the facts, and asked if something could not be done to provide poor ministers with books. "Some of the applicants," wrote C. H. Spurgeon, "say that they have not been able to buy a new book for the last ten years! Does anybody wonder if preachers are sometimes dull?" Almost directly came the first outside contribution—a gift of five shillings in stamps sent anonymously. Other amounts quickly followed, and within two months of the earliest announcement in *The Sword and the Trowel*, Mrs. Spurgeon was sending out parcels of books, containing not only the "Lectures," but other and more expensive works. The grants were extended to ministers of all denominations, and the books distributed were not confined to the authorship of C. H. Spurgeon, although of course the larger proportion were from his pen. The letters of thanks received from poor ministers who benefited by the kindness of Mrs. Spurgeon and her helpers were quite pathetic, and they revealed a state of poverty on the part of the pastors of poor congregations little dreamt of by the Church at large. Hundreds of clergymen of the Church of England, principally curates, have participated in the benefits of the Book Fund, and have been among the most appreciative. It says much for the broad basis on which the institution has been conducted that the ministers receiving parcels of books have included not only Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, Anglicans, and Presbyterians, but preachers of the following denominations: Moravian, Swedenborgian, Irvingite, Plymouth Brethren, Waldensian, Countess of Huntingdon's Con-

nexion, Nestorian, Unitarian, Morrisonian, the Friends, and Lutheran.

In 1879 a Pastors' Aid Society was founded in connection with the Book Fund, the generosity of friends enabling Mrs Spurgeon to assist, with grants of money and clothing, poor ministers who were hard pressed through illness or other unavoidable circumstances. This Society has proved a boon to many a tried pastor, and has often kept the wolf from the door when no other means were available. Still another branch was added to the Book Fund in 1883, when Mrs. Spurgeon undertook to send out monthly, four copies of her husband's sermons to a number of foreign missionaries. A gentleman in Russia had written to C. H. Spurgeon, suggesting such a course, and stating that the sermons would prove of great assistance to the recipients. He enclosed five pounds as the first instalment of a fund for the purpose, and to this the preacher himself added another five pounds when handing the money over to his wife. This work has wonderfully grown, and in the last year of C. H. Spurgeon's life, 35,306 sermons were distributed by means of this special fund, in addition to 5,970 books to poor ministers.*

It had always been a matter of regret to Mrs. Spurgeon that owing to urgent need for books among ministers, she was quite unable to extend the benefits of her Book Fund to the great army of lay-preachers, many of whom, as one put it, were "poor in purse, short of time, and in need of teaching." Mrs. Spurgeon mentioned this matter in her report for 1887, and Mr. Sydney S. Bagster, of the

* The number of sermons distributed at home and abroad through this fund in the years 1901 and 1902 (the joint report for which is the last issued at the time of writing) was 147,180. The number of books in those two years was 10,113; making a total of 199,315 volumes distributed in the twenty-seven years since the foundation of the Book Fund in 1875.

Conference Hall, Mildmay Park, offered to take up the work. An Auxiliary Book Fund was started, and each year, by its aid, a large number of valuable volumes have been distributed among poor lay-preachers. Mr. Bagster managed the fund until 1891, when Mrs. Spurgeon took over the work and it became a part of the regular labours carried on in connection with the Book Fund at her home.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PASTOR, PARENT AND CITIZEN.

AFTER the opening of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, when it was seen that the popular approbation of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's preaching was no mere passing fancy, but that a solid and lasting work was being done, the *furore* occasioned by his advent to the Metropolis gradually subsided. He came to be regarded as an inevitable component of the religious life of London, and although still generally recognized as the most remarkable preacher of his day—remarkable in a good sense or otherwise, according to the standpoint of the observer—yet it was the custom (and in many quarters still is) to view his early achievements of attracting huge crowds wherever he went as the most extraordinary feature of his life. But such an idea is certainly incorrect. Other earnest and eloquent preachers have been able to gather the multitudes to hear them—St. John Chrysostom, Wycliffe, Luther, Wesley, Whitefield, for instance—but none of these did what C. H. Spurgeon succeeded in doing. In the whole range of Christian history you cannot find another instance of a man gathering, building up, and holding together for nearly forty years a church and congregation of five or six thousand souls without a single sign of disintegration making itself visible. Three times a week—twice on Sundays and once on Thursdays—he used to preach a lengthy sermon, and in addition conducted various other meetings

and services weekly, but never once did his people tire of him. Instead, their love and devotion increased as time went on, and it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that many members of his congregation would have willingly endured his sufferings and even gone to death for his sake had he been able thereby to escape the pain which clung to him in his later years. Preaching to the same congregation for forty years and ever remaining fresh, ministering to the same assembly of six thousand souls for close upon half-a-century without a suspicion of friction discovering itself, making his church the centre of a vast net-work of organizations any single one of which would have been a splendid achievement for a man, and never finding the finances to fail, all this was the marvel and miracle of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's life.

The only breaks in the continuity of his ministry were caused by illness, breaks which became more frequent in later life, when the distinguished preacher found it necessary to seek escape from the rigours of an English winter by sojourning in the Riviera. The first long illness occurred at the end of 1869, the preacher having contracted a mild attack of small-pox soon after attending the Lord Mayor's annual banquet for the first and only time in his life. C. H. Spurgeon could never again be induced to become a guest at that function, although many times invited to do so by Lord Mayors who delighted to honour him. "I have only once been in such high society," he would say, "and then I caught the small-pox, so I have determined never again to form one of that company."

Two years later the preacher was laid low by a long and painful illness, which kept him out of his pulpit for twelve weeks. During that time he often wrote to his flock, urging them to pray for him and to manifest increased

zeal and diligence in the Lord's work. "I hope the week-night services will not droop," he writes in a letter dated June 11. "If you stay away, let it be when I am there, but not now. May the deacons and elders find themselves surrounded by an untiring band of helpers at every meeting for worship." In this same letter he asks that in addition to the individual prayer, which was being offered everywhere, the church should meet and intercede for his recovery, and this suggestion was instantly followed. A week later the invalid writes: "As soon as the church had resolved to meet for special prayer for me I began rapidly to recover. It pleased God to turn the wind at the beginning of this week, and the change in the temperature has worked wonders. We may truthfully say of the Wednesday meeting for prayer that the Lord fulfilled His word: 'Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.' For all this great goodness I pray you to unite with me in sincere and intense gratitude to the Lord our God."

The pain of the sufferer had been terrible—almost beyond endurance, and he had had to cry out in his torment. At last, begging everyone to leave the sick chamber, he prayed in an agony that God would ease him. "Thou art my Father and I am Thy child," pleaded the sufferer, "and Thou, as a Father, art tender and full of mercy. I could not bear to see my child suffer as Thou makest me suffer; and if I saw him tormented as I am now, I would do what I could to help him and put my arms under him to sustain him. Wilt Thou hide Thy face from me, my Father? Wilt Thou still lay on me Thy heavy hand and not give me a smile from Thy countenance?" The prayer was very real and the petitioner's faith was great, so that when those who nursed him

returned he had full confidence that the prayer would be speedily answered. "I shall never have such agony again from this moment," he declared, "for God has heard my prayer"; and sure enough ease came and the racking pain did not return.

By Sunday, July 2, C. H. Spurgeon was sufficiently



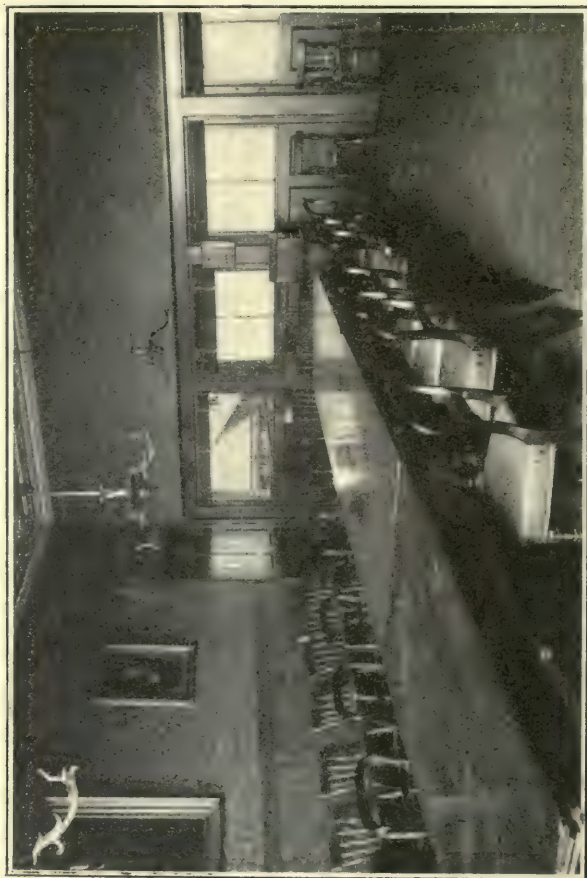
(Photos by Mr. E. Johnson.)

Bronze busts of Calvin and Luther which were among the few ornaments of C. H. Spurgeon's vestry at the Tabernacle.

recovered to preach at the Tabernacle in the morning, and he took for his text the appropriate passage in Psalm lxxi. 14: "But I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more." The congregation was delighted to get its beloved pastor back again, and in the minutes of a church-meeting, held on July 24th, it recorded its sense

of gratitude to Almighty God for restoring the preacher, and expressed sincerest sympathy with the latter in his severe and protracted illness. The church-books, indeed, throughout the pastorate of C. H. Spurgeon are sprinkled with entries recording gratitude and satisfaction at the blessings received from his ministry, or condoling with him in time of illness and pain. The bond of love between pastor and people was made perfect in suffering. But it was no one-sided bond. If C. H. Spurgeon was loved by his flock, he bore for them an equally strong admiration and affection. "I have beheld in this church," he once said, "apostolical piety revived; I will say it to the glory of God that I have seen as earnest and as true piety as Paul or Peter ever witnessed. I have marked in some here present, such godly zeal, such holiness, such devotion to the Master's business, as Christ Himself must look upon with joy and satisfaction. . . . Though we are not free from ten thousand faults, yet I have often admired the goodness of God which has enabled us with a hearty grip to hold each other by the hand and say, 'We love each other for Christ's sake and for the truth's sake, and we hope to live in each other's love till we die, wishing, if it were possible, to be buried side by side.'"

C. H. Spurgeon always felt severely the loss of old and tried members of his church. When Mrs. Bartlett, the conductor of the Young Women's Bible Class at the Tabernacle, through whose instrumentality nearly a thousand members had joined the church, passed away in 1875, the preacher paid a touching tribute to her memory. "Mrs. Bartlett," he said, "was a choice gift from God to the church at the Tabernacle, and the influence of her life was far-reaching, stimulating many others besides those who by her means were actually led to the Saviour. We



(Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)

The Ladies' Working Room, also used for Committee Meetings.

miss her sadly, but her spiritual children are with us still; they have stood the test of years, and the most searching test of all, namely, the loss of her motherly counsel, and inspiring words. She did not build with wood, hay and stubble, for the edifice remains, and for this let God be glorified. . . . It pleased God to make our sister an eminently practical woman. She was no dreamer of dreams, but a steady, plodding worker. She never wasted two minutes of her Pastor's time with marvellous methods and miraculous plans; she instinctively saw what could be done and what should be done, and she did it, looking to God for the blessing." The inscription on her monument in Nunhead Cemetery records that "The Pastors, Deacons and Elders of the Church in the Metropolitan Tabernacle unite with her class and the students of the College in erecting this memorial to her surpassing worth."

Perhaps nothing gave Charles Haddon Spurgeon greater satisfaction than the fact that his sons, as they grew up, followed in their father's footsteps. The lads were converted at an early age, and when they went to Mr. Olding's school at Brighton they started a little prayer-meeting among their fellow-pupils. Charles wrote and told his father, who, in replying, said, "Dear boy,—One of my sweetest joys is to hear that a spirit of prayer is in your school, and that you participate in it. To know that you love the Lord and are mighty in prayer would be my crowning joy; the hope that you do so already is a happy one to me. I should like you to *preach*; but it is best that you pray; many a preacher has proved a castaway, but never one who has truly learned to pray."

Later on, in June, 1874, when Charles was about to enter upon a commercial career (for both sons had some training in secular pursuits, Charles in a business house,

and Thomas in a wood-engraving establishment), C. H. Spurgeon wrote: "We shall hope to see you an upright man, capable of any honest achievement, and bending all



C. H. Spurgeon's two sons, Thomas and Charles, as boys.

your strength to accomplish an honourable life-work. I am full of hope about you; and if I feel any anxiety, it is because I love you so well that I want you to be a greater

success than other young men. I believe you love the Lord, and that is the main thing; the next is, *stick to it*. Leave childish things once for all, and buckle to the work. It will not be pleasant, and it may even become irksome; but the harder you work at first, the less you will have to do in later life. The times are so pushing that you must put all your energies; and, above all, you must be careful and very persevering; and then, with God's blessing, you will soon take a position to which your father and mother can point with pleasure. If you do not preach the Gospel you must help me to do it, and make money for Jesus. With my two sons at my side, I shall be able to do marvels, if the Lord be with us."

The preacher was not deceived in his belief that his sons "loved the Lord." Three months after the date of the above letter they came before the church at the Metropolitan Tabernacle for membership, and having given a satisfactory statement of the work of grace in their souls, were on September 21st, 1874, baptized by their father in the presence of an enormous congregation. To commemorate the occasion, Mrs. Spurgeon was presented with an illuminated address, in which the church unanimously recorded its thanks to God for so greatly using the pious teachings and example of the mother to the quickening and fostering of the Divine life in the hearts of her twin sons, and earnestly praying that amidst her long continued sufferings she might ever be consoled with all spiritual comfort, and by the growing devoutness of those who were thus "twice given to her in the Lord." Thomas and Charles Spurgeon were received into fellowship by the church, and participated in the communion service for the first time on October 4th.

Soon afterwards they entered the Pastors' College, and

when Charles at the close of his course was called to the pastorate of South Street Baptist Chapel, Greenwich, his father delivered the sermon at the recognition service. "Preach up Christ, my boy!" he said, leaning over the pulpit rail and looking at the young minister below. "Preach Him up!" Many times, when C. H. Spurgeon was laid aside by illness, one or other of his sons occupied the Tabernacle pulpit in his stead, and often when the father went to fulfil preaching engagements away from his own church he would take one of his sons with him to address an overflow meeting.

Even at this period the great preacher was slandered pretty freely, and words were put into his mouth, which not only he had never used but which expressed opinions quite contrary to those held by him. It began to be repeated, for instance, that he had declared there were in hell infants a span long. At last a correspondent inquired if he had ever said this, and in reply C. H. Spurgeon wrote: "I have never at any time in my life said, believed, or imagined that any infant, under any circumstances, would be cast into hell. I have always believed in the salvation of all infants, and I intensely detest the opinions which your opponent dared to attribute to me. I do not believe that on this earth there is a single professing Christian holding the damnation of infants; or, if there be, he must be insane, or utterly ignorant of Christianity. I am obliged by this opportunity of denying the calumny, although the author of it will probably find no difficulty in inventing some other fiction to be affirmed as unblushingly as the present one. He who doubts God's Word is naturally much at home in slandering the Lord's servants."

At another time an American Presbyterian paper stated, "on the authority of a sainted gentleman," that C. H.

Oct. 1, 1879.

Righting Lane, Weymouth.

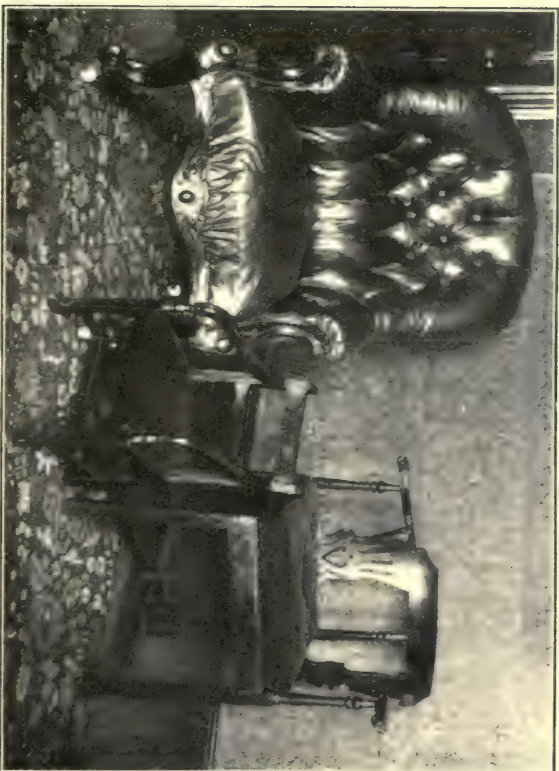
My engaged son. The next your presence is
dear may be coming with an of comfort show the
wife, there reading the whole to the whole light
as eyes my note, of her, from when heart
this more the better, May God's may grow and
is the for I am in my. restored, and
the of use. should long may. With health of the
first one. like you the wives. whole
day just all the spread to all. With love,
I the very world to be a example your love,
We upon to know blessing to a truly husband
over you that you your children
cards, to are the happy to your
dear's best wife husband, a good
(DEAL
OCCASIONALLY)

A postcard written by C. H. Spurgeon on the day postcards first came into use. The words have been written to follow one another up and down instead of horizontally, in playful allusion to the possibility of strangers reading the note.

Spurgeon had declared: "I hate a close-communion Baptist as I hate the devil." His attention was drawn to the statement, and of course he categorically denied that he had ever said or thought such a thing. "The 'saint,'" he added drily, "must have dreamed it, or have mistaken the person."

In politics, C. H. Spurgeon was a Liberal, and at the time of a General Election it was widely reported that he had said he would vote for the devil himself if he were a Liberal. The preacher was bombarded with inquiries from scandalized correspondents, and it became necessary to print a circular postcard to send by way of reply. The denial was couched in characteristic phraseology. "I certainly should not vote for the devil under any circumstances, nor am I able to conceive of him as so restored as to become a Liberal. I think he has had a considerable hand in the invention of many a story which has of late been published concerning me."

His attitude towards politics often added to the preacher's heavy correspondence. Some disliked his voting for the Liberal Party, and others would not have him vote at all. One gentleman wrote during a General Election, expressing regret that C. H. Spurgeon should have descended "from his high and lofty position as a servant of God and preacher of the everlasting Gospel, into the defiled arena of party politics." "Your letter amuses me," replied the preacher, "because you are so evidently a rank Tory, and so hearty in your political convictions that in spite of your religious scruples you must needs interfere in politics and write to me. If there is anything defiling in it, you are certainly over head and ears. However, dear sir, I thank you for your kindness in wishing to put me right, and I can assure you that I



(Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)

Three notable chairs which stood in the Pastor's Vestry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The large one is that in which C. H. Spurgeon rested ; the small one was used by him as a child and belonged to his grandfather ; the third chair was Dr. Gill's favourite seat.

vote as devoutly as I pray, and feel it to be a part of my love to God and to my neighbour to try to turn out the Government whom your letter would lead me to let alone. You are as wrong as wrong can be in your notion ; but as it keeps you from voting, I shall not try to convert you, for I am morally certain you would vote for the Tory candidate. In things Divine we are probably at one ; and you shall abstain from voting *as unto the Lord*, and I will vote *as unto the Lord*, and we will both give Him thanks."

At another time, on the way to fulfil a preaching engagement, he called at a polling station to vote, and mentioning this fact to the friend whose pulpit he was to occupy, that worthy exclaimed, "To vote! but, my dear brother, I thought you were a citizen of the New Jerusalem!" "So I am," replied C. H. Spurgeon, "but my 'old man' is a citizen of this world." "Ah!" said the friend, "but you should mortify your 'old man.'" "That is exactly what I did," was the rejoinder, "for my old man is a Tory and I made him vote for the Liberals!"

Although a hearty admirer of Mr. Gladstone in most things, Charles Haddon Spurgeon differed from him on a number of points, and when the Home Rule Bill was brought in the preacher declared to an English friend of his that he believed it to be "a fatal stab at our common country," and "a very serious error" which he was bound to oppose. Mr. Gladstone, on his part, held C. H. Spurgeon in great estimation, and on one occasion attended an evening service at the Tabernacle. He invited the preacher over and over again to take breakfast or dinner at Downing Street, and also to pay a visit to Hawarden, but pressure of work, or illness, invariably prevented C. H. Spurgeon from accepting. The only occasion on which

he visited Mr. Gladstone was when, having some matter to discuss with the Premier, he asked for an interview of ten minutes at Downing Street. The interview was readily granted, and when the allotted time had expired, the preacher rose to leave, but Mr. Gladstone begged him to remain longer, and the two distinguished men talked for some time on subjects of mutual interest.

Years later, when Charles Haddon Spurgeon was in his last illness, Mr. Gladstone wrote to the preacher's wife: "In my own home, darkened at the present time, I have read with sad interest the daily accounts of Mr. Spurgeon's illness; and I cannot help conveying to you the earnest assurance of my sympathy with you and with him, and of my cordial admiration, not only of his splendid powers, but still more of his devoted and unfailing character. May I humbly commend you and him, in all contingencies, to the infinite stores of the Divine love and mercy." The letter arrived at Westwood when the sufferer was enjoying a brief period of relief from the delirium which was so distressing a feature of the illness, and with his own hand he appended a postscript to Mrs. Spurgeon's letter of grateful thanks. "Yours is a word of love such as those only write who have been into the King's country and have seen much of His face. My heart's love to you.—C. H. Spurgeon."

CHAPTER XXVII.

SOME NOTABLE CELEBRATIONS.

AS might be supposed in the case of a man of so many activities as Charles Haddon Spurgeon, every day almost was the anniversary of some notable event in his life or ministry. The course of time, too, brought round many a date worthy of commemoration, from the fact that five, ten, or twenty years before some successful Christian agency had been inaugurated thereon or some remarkable event in the history of his church had happened. Such occasions were frequently signalised by an entry in the church-book recording grateful thanks to God for His goodness, and by the raising of a sum of money for the particular work then under notice, the latter showing clearly that the former was no mere empty platitude.

There were, however, some anniversaries of more than ordinary interest or importance, when the celebrations were of an exceptional character, such, for instance, as the completion of the twenty-first year of the pastor's ministry. The minutes of the annual church-meeting, held at the Tabernacle on January 8th, 1875, contain the following entry referring thereto: "That we desire as a church to record our devout gratitude to our heavenly Father on the completion of the twenty-first year of our pastor's ministry amongst us. We also desire to present our hearty congratulations to him that he has been privileged to complete the twentieth volume of his printed sermons, and also during

the past year to accomplish the erection of the new College Buildings. We feel it desirable that a permanent record should be made of these important events, and therefore agree that it shall be entered in our church-book and that a suitable address, handsomely framed and beautifully illuminated, shall be presented to our pastor as an expression of our loving sympathy with him, which was never felt by us to a greater degree than at the present time." The address was duly prepared, and presented to C. H. Spurgeon on March 30th at a great meeting of the church, which had gathered to welcome him on his return from the Continent after an absence of eleven weeks. It had been proposed that the address should be accompanied by a present of £2,000, but this C. H. Spurgeon resolutely declined to receive, asking that any monetary gifts might find their way into the funds of the Pastors' College or other institutions.

But the greatest of all the celebrations which marked epochs in the preacher's life was that associated with his pastoral "silver wedding"—the completion of the twenty-fifth year of his ministry in London. His friends and fellow-workers naturally felt that such an event should not pass without some worthy recognition, and it was proposed to present the pastor with a substantial testimonial, as a mark of his people's appreciation and gratitude. The matter was mentioned to him, but again, with characteristic unselfishness, he declined to reap any personal benefit from the event, suggesting, however, that if the friends wished to make a gift which, while commemorating the goodness of God in blessing the church with its pastors, officers, and members, should at the same time meet with his own personal appreciation, they might raise a fund of £5,000 as an endowment for the Almshouses, the

church's heaviest burden at that time. Although they would have liked their pastor to reap some material benefit himself from their gifts, the church-members readily fell in with his suggestion, and by January, 1879, far more than the amount named had been received. A great bazaar in aid of the fund was held at the Tabernacle, and realized £3,463, which the contributions of friends increased to £6,476 9s.,* surely a remarkable sum to be raised by a single church for such a purpose. At that time bazaars had not become associated with the questionable and worldly methods which afterwards led C. H. Spurgeon, and others like-minded, to decide that such means of raising money for religious purposes were best left alone.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon had had a long and painful illness, while friends were thus preparing to celebrate his pastoral "silver wedding." He had spent many months at Mentone in the company of his son Thomas, but progress was slow, and it was not till April, 1879, that he was able to return to London, even then against the advice of his medical attendants. Tuesday, May 20th, was the date fixed for the presentation of the testimonial, but the celebration of the "silver wedding" commenced on the previous Sunday, when C. H. Spurgeon, in the course of his sermons reviewed the events of the past twenty-five years in so far as they affected the church and its work. "Brethren," he said, "there is about 'the midst of years' a certain special danger, and this led the prophet as it shall lead us at this time to pray in the words which I have selected for my text: 'O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known.'

* The sum was first of all made up to £6,233, but after the presentation it was increased to the larger amount, the contributions ranging from single farthings to one gift of £250.

Youth has its perils, but these are past ; age has its infirmities, but these we have not yet reached ; it is ours then to pray against the dangers which are present with us 'in the midst of the years.' The middle passage of life with us as individuals and with us as a church is crowded with peculiar perils. There is a certain spur and stimulus of novelty



Charles Haddon Spurgeon in 1878.

about religious movements which in a few years is worn out. I well recollect when we were called 'a nine days' wonder,' and our critics prophesied that our work would speedily collapse. Such excitement had been seen before and had passed away ; and this would be one among other bubbles of the hour. The nine days have lasted consider-

ably long;—may nine such days follow them in God's infinite mercy! Now, whatever detractors may say, we know that there was then a life, an energy, a freshness about everything which was done by us as a church which we could hardly expect to continue with us for all these years. From an admirable fervour many cool down to a dangerous chill. This is to be bemoaned where it has occurred, and it is to be feared where as yet it has not happened, for such is the natural tendency of things. Beloved brethren, I have prayed to God, that when what is called the *esprit de corps* is gone from us, the *Esprit de Dieu* may still abide with us; that when the spirit which grows out of our association with each other declines, we may be sustained by the Spirit which unites us all to the Lord Jesus."

He then went on to speak of the happy fellowship and the close bonds of love in which the church and its pastor had been united, and of their joint gratitude to God for the power which invariably accompanied the preaching of the Gospel. This last statement was absolutely free from egotism, for the preacher ascribed all the glory to God. "It was not I, but the grace of God which was with me. There were stricken down among us some of the most unlikely ones. There were brought into the church and added to God's people, some of those who had wandered far away from the path of truth and righteousness; and these, by their penitent love, quickened our life and increased our zeal. The Lord gave the people more and more a willingness to hear, and there was no pause either in the flowing stream of hearers or in the incoming of converts. The Holy Spirit came down like showers which saturate the soil till the clods are ready for the breaking; and then it was not long before on the right and on the left we heard

the cry, 'What must I do to be saved?' We were busy enough in those days in seeing converts; and thank God we have been so ever since. We had some among us who gave themselves up to watch for the souls of men, and we have a goodly number of such helpers now, perhaps more than ever we had; and, thank God, these found and still find many souls to watch over. Still the arrows fly and still the smitten cry out for help and ask that they may be guided to the great healing Lord. Blessed be God's Name for this! He went with us all those early days, and gave us sheaves even at the first sowing, so that we began with mercy; and He has been with us even until now, till our life has become one long harvest-home."

The next day there was a praise-service, and on the Tuesday the great meeting for the presentation of the testimonial was held in the Tabernacle. It lasted for several hours, and was characterized throughout by an enthusiasm that can never have been exceeded in similar circumstances. Everyone present seemed anxious to show in some unmistakable manner his deep love and regard for the pastor of the church, and tears filled the eyes of many as they listened to Mr. B. W. Carr, one of the deacons, giving a grateful retrospect of events in connection with the church during the past quarter-of-a-century. A deputation from the London Baptist Association presented a letter of congratulation, and after an address from the Rev. C. Stanford, D.D., upon "The Baptist Churches Twenty-five Years Ago and Now," the presentation was made by Mr. W. Olney. His speech was short, but as the spokesman for the whole church he sought to convey some idea of the love in which the pastor was held. The entire lack of self-interest which had always characterized C. H. Spurgeon, his unexampled generosity, and his amazing activity, were all dwelt upon,

and then the large sum that had been raised was placed at the pastor's absolute disposal.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon rose to thank the people for enabling him to endow the Almshouses, but the outburst of cheering was so great that it was a con-



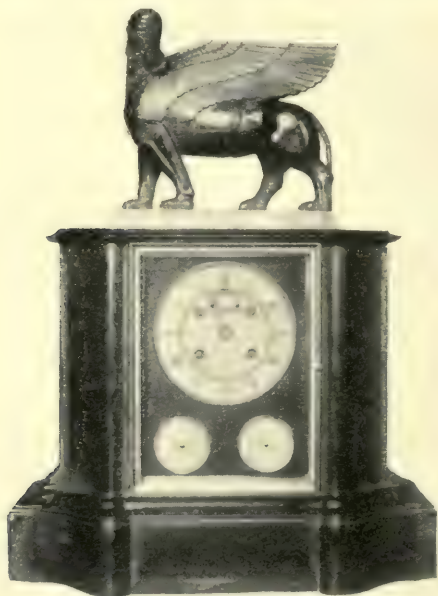
C. H. Spurgeon and his wife in 1881.

siderable time before he had a chance of making himself heard. So soon as it had been found that the sum collected exceeded the £5,000 required for the Almshouses by more than a thousand, the deacons had pressed their pastor to accept the balance for his own personal use, but

this he resolutely refused to do, and he now told the people his reason for such action. "It is a testimonial of gratitude to God for twenty-five years of happy communion and prosperity, and unto God let the testimonial go—all of it, with the exception of a bronze clock for my study, which I will accept as a memorial of the fond affection of my dear people towards me." He outlined the way in which he intended to dispose of the money, the Colportage Association, Mrs. Spurgeon's Book Fund, the Poor Fund, and the Orphanage all benefiting. "Oh, that I could do more for Christ and more for the poor. For these I have turned beggar before now, and shall not be ashamed to beg again. The outside world cannot understand that a man should be moved by any motive except that of personal gain; but if they knew the power of love to Jesus they would understand that greed of wealth is vile as the dust beneath his feet to the lover of the Saviour."

No doubt this remark was called forth by statements which had appeared in the newspapers of late to the effect that the preacher made "a very good thing out of the Tabernacle," and instancing as a proof the presentation of a large sum of money to him for personal use. He had referred to this matter the previous day in even more pointed terms. "I daresay you have all heard that 'Spurgeon makes a good thing out of the Tabernacle.' Well, whenever anybody hints that to you, you may, on my authority, assure them that I do. I should not like anybody to think that my Master does not pay His servants well. He loadeth us with benefits, and I am perfectly satisfied with His wages; but if any persons assert that, by my preaching in this place, I have made a purse for myself, I can refer them to those who know me and my way of life among you. 'Ah, but,' they say, 'he has had a testimonial

of £6,000 presented to him.' Yes, he has had it, and he thanks everybody for it. Perhaps there are some other persons who would like a similar testimonial, and I wish they may get it and do the same with it as I have done. Legacies left to me, and sums subscribed for the Orphanage



(Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)

C. H. Spurgeon's Vestry Clock. The timepiece was destroyed entirely in the Tabernacle fire, but the bronze figure on top was recovered, although somewhat damaged, and has since been restored.

and College, and so on, are spoken of as if I had some private interest in them, whereas I have neither a direct nor indirect pecuniary interest in any of these works to the amount of a penny a year. With regard to all things else,

from the first day until now, I have acted on no other principle but that of perfect consecration to the work whereunto I am called. I have no riches. I sometimes wish that I had, for I could use money in an abundance of profitable ways. What have I gained of late years in my ministry here? I have received all that I wished by way of salary, but I have for years expended almost all of it in the cause of God, and in some years even more than all. As far as my pastoral office is concerned, the net income for myself, after giving my share to all holy service, is not so much that any man could envy me. Yet this is not your fault, or anyone's fault; it is my joy and delight to have it so. The Lord is a good and gracious paymaster; and inasmuch as men say, 'Doth Spurgeon serve God for nought?' Spurgeon replies, 'No, he is paid a thousand times over, and finds it a splendid thing to be in the service of the Lord Jesus. If anyone will serve the Lord Jesus Christ after the same or better fashion, he too will make the same splendid thing of it; he shall have splendid opportunities for working from morning till night, and far into the night on many an occasion; splendid openings for giving away as much as he can earn; splendid opportunities of finding happiness in making other people happy and easing the sorrows of others by entering into hearty sympathy with them.'

But whatever evil-disposed persons and the outside world generally might think and say, Charles Haddon Spurgeon's own friends and flock knew that he was far above any sordid motive, and their confidence in him ever remained the same. "The tie which unites us is quite unlike that which usually exists between ministers and people—we are truly and heartily one," he said in acknowledging the testimonial, and his concluding words are well worth repeating: "This love

is to me an amazement. I am the most astonished person among you. I do not comprehend it. It seems a romance to me. What I have done I shall do still, namely, love you with all my heart, and love my Lord as His grace enables me. I mean to go on preaching Jesus, and His Gospel, and you may be sure that I shall not preach anything else, for it is with me Christ or nothing. I am sold up; and my stock-in-trade is gone if Jesus Christ is gone. He is the sum of my ministry, my all in all. Now you will please to understand, that I mean all that *you* would mean, if you were in my position; and I beg again to thank you most heartily, every one of you, especially the dear friends who read us the papers, especially those who listened to them, and especially everybody."

Rather more than five years after the pastoral "Silver Wedding" there was another celebration of a somewhat similar character. Charles Haddon Spurgeon completed the fiftieth year of his life on June 19th, 1884, and the Tabernacle church, which had decided to recognize the event in some suitable manner, instructed the deacons to make arrangements for the formation of a testimonial fund, which should be presented to the pastor, and on this occasion be accepted for his own personal benefit. No sooner, however, was the matter broached to C. H. Spurgeon, than he let it be understood once and for all, that he could accept no money for himself, but would be glad if an amount should be devoted to the Lord's work in recognition of his jubilee. A fund was opened, and although, as on the occasion of the silver wedding, many stated that they would have given more if the money had been for the pastor's personal use, yet the sum collected reached £4,500.

The jubilee meetings extended over two evenings, those

of June 18th and 19th, the former being for the Tabernacle congregation and for those connected with missions and other agencies emanating from the church, whilst the Thursday gathering was a public one. From the general point of view the meetings were even more interesting than those which were held at the time of the "Silver Wedding," for a number of men distinguished in the religious world were present who had not been at the earlier celebration. The Wednesday meeting was addressed by Mr. D. L. Moody, the evangelist, who told how, when he made his maiden trip to London in 1867, the first well-known building he visited was the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Away in America the desire had seized him to hear the young preacher who was stirring London, and after coming to England, he followed C. H. Spurgeon about wherever he preached. Among other places he heard the pastor of the Tabernacle in the Agricultural Hall, Islington, little thinking that he would himself preach there later. "I want to say to you, Mr. Spurgeon," he concluded, "'God bless you.' I know that you love me, but I assure you I love you a thousand times more than you can ever love me, because you have been such a blessing to me, while I have been a very little blessing to you. When I think of a man or woman who has been in this Tabernacle time after time, and heard the Gospel, I pity them, deep down in my heart, if they are found among the lost. I have read your sermons for twenty-five years, and what has cheered my heart has been that in them was no uncertain sound. In closing, let me give you a poem that one of our American Indians wrote: "The first line began with, 'go on,' the second line was, 'go on,' and the third line was 'go on,' and this was all he could write. I say, 'Go on, brother, and God bless you!'"

The meeting was made still more interesting from the fact that three generations of Spurgeons were present and addressed the audience—the pastor, his aged father, and his son Charles.



C. H. Spurgeon at fifty years of age.

The Thursday meeting was presided over by the Earl of Shaftesbury, and among the speakers were the present Archdeacon of Westminster, Sir William McArthur, M.P., Dr. Parker, the Rev. Newman Hall, and the Rev. O. P.

Gifford, of Boston, who presented an address from the Baptist ministers of Boston. In thanking those who had contributed to the testimonial, C. H. Spurgeon declared that he had quite intended handing over the total amount



Mrs. Spurgeon at the time of her husband's jubilee.

en bloc, as he had done with the silver-wedding gift, but his friends would not hear of that. Some had even declared that they would give nothing if the Jubilee were made a pretext for assisting the societies, so he had asked

that the contributors should themselves allocate their gifts, mentioning four particular objects to be assisted after the Jubilee House, then being erected at the rear of the Tabernacle at a cost of a thousand pounds, had been paid for. Comparatively small sums, however, were allotted to these causes, the contributors evidently being very anxious that the pastor should receive the money as a personal gift. He declared, therefore, that he would accept the money for himself so far as that was the expressed desire, but he did not know how he could better have it than by being allowed to give it away. "What I have," he said, "is best enjoyed by myself personally when I can use it in some way or other for the advantage of the work of God." He then went on to mention the manner in which he intended to dispose of the money. The Jubilee House was to be paid for and furnished, St. Thomas's Hospital was to receive a grant because it often helped poor friends of the Tabernacle and the Almshouses, the Baptist Fund for the relief of poor ministers, the Colportage Association, the Book Fund, and many other agencies were to be liberally helped. Finally, the pastor declared that he wanted to give £250 towards the cost of the new Tabernacle, then being built at Auckland, New Zealand, for his son Thomas. The speaker concluded: "Now I thank everybody who has given a hundred pounds, and everybody who has given a penny. God bless you and return it to you in every way. One of our brethren told you the other night what once happened to me. I had been preaching in a country place, and a good woman gave me five shillings. I said to her, 'Well, my dear friend, I do not want your money.' She said, 'But you must take it; I give it to you because I get good from you.' I said, 'Shall I give it to the College?' She answered, 'I don't care about the College, I care about

you.' 'Then I will give it to the Orphanage.' 'No,' she said, 'you take it yourself.' I said, 'You want it more than I do.' She replied, 'Now do you think that your Lord and Master would have talked like that to the woman who came and broke the alabaster box over Him? I do not think He would.' She added, 'I know you do not mean to be unkind. I worked extra to earn it and give it to you.' I told her that she owed me nothing, and that woman owed the Lord everything. 'What am I to do with it?' She said, 'Buy anything you like with it. I do not care. Only mind, you must have it for yourself.' I mention the incident because it is much in that spirit that the friends have given now. The Lord bless you! The Lord bless you! The Lord bless you yet more and more, you and your children!"

There was considerable relief on the part of the deacons when these Jubilee meetings were over, for at that period the Fenians were very active, and a threat, which there was reason to believe was not a mere idle hoax, had been made to blow up the Tabernacle while it was crowded with those celebrating the historic event. The general public knew nothing of this threat till afterwards, but the police were on the alert and the officials of the Tabernacle felt the strain and anxiety severely.

For a long time after the presentation of each of the testimonials, C. H. Spurgeon was pestered with begging letters from all parts of the country, asking for assistance under various pleas. Indeed all his life he suffered from this nuisance, particularly when the newspapers published reports, as they often did, of mythical fortunes left to the preacher. Many of the writers were no doubt impostors, but there were also people, who had failed in business through misfortune and other causes, who

expected the preacher to pay their debts. One woman wrote asking substantial help for her husband, and stated that it was clear C. H. Spurgeon had so much money that he did not want any more, or he would never have given away the testimonial. It must not be thought, however, that the preacher was generous only in connection with the great causes which he inaugurated or pleaded. Few men have done more in the way of private philanthropy, and although in helping the distressed he worked as secretly as possible, it is known that he was constantly giving mangles and sewing machines to poor widows, and doing similar deeds of kindness where he knew of deserving cases for help. Even street beggars who called at his house were generously treated, and among the fraternity the great preacher passed by the name of "Soft Tommy." "I would rather be remembered as 'Soft Tommy' than as 'Hard Jack,'" was his comment when a friend informed him of his nickname.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

VISITS AND VISITORS.

IN these later years everyone delighted to honour the preacher who had so wonderfully weathered the storm of criticism and abuse, and he was frequently the guest of distinguished men at private parties, although he could never bring himself to attend banquets. "Really I am not a man for a feast, even if I could come," he wrote once to the Sheffield Master Cutler-elect, declining an invitation to the annual Cutlers' Feast on account of an accumulation of work. "Our Lord Mayor pressed me to meet the Archbishops and Bishops at a banquet but I could not bring my soul to it—I mean the banquet; I had no objection to the Bishops." Where two or three friends had been invited to meet him at a private gathering, however, he usually went if his ministerial work allowed him, and on such occasions his rare wit was highly appreciated by the guests. Dining with a number of her Majesty's Judges once, at the house of Mr. Justice Lush, he announced that he had a difficult point of law which he should like to have decided by the legal authorities present. A man had been lying in Camberwell for a fortnight past, and neither the police nor the parish officials had been able to get him buried. What should be done? The judges were greatly interested, consulted together for a long time, and, after quoting various Acts of Parliament, said that if the relatives

persisted in their refusal to bury the man, certain local authorities whom they named could step in. "There was one little item in the case that I omitted to mention," said C. H. Spurgeon, after listening to the learned arguments of the judges, "*the man is not yet dead!*"

At another time he dined with Dean Stanley at Westminster, and there met the Rector of Bishopsgate, "Hang Theology" Rogers. "We had a merry time," says C. H. Spurgeon, "especially when the question of Disestablishment was under discussion." The Dean asked the Baptist preacher if when that event happened he would like to have Westminster Abbey. "No, thank you," said C. H. Spurgeon, "I have not horses enough to fill it." Dean Stanley acknowledged that the building was more adapted for stables than for preaching the Gospel to the masses. Then becoming serious he asked what was to happen to Mr. Rogers and himself if Disestablishment became a fact. "Why, you will have to do as I do," replied the pastor, "live upon what your people give you." "Oh, dear!" cried the others in unison, "if we only had what our people gave us it would be a very poor living." C. H. Spurgeon suggested that they should educate their congregations in the Scriptural system of giving before the day of "emancipation" arrived.

The fact that his conversations and addresses often sparkled with wit offended some of the more strait-laced of his followers, although in the pulpit a very sparing use was made of his powers in this respect. "If you had known how many others I kept back," he wrote to a correspondent who had objected to a certain humorous expression, "you would not have found fault with that one, but you would have commended me for the restraint I had exercised." He never went out of his way to make a

joke, but the fun was quite spontaneous, and often served its purpose in emphasizing a point or conveying a rebuke which a more solemn selection of words would have failed in doing. What, for instance, could have been happier than his remark to the newly-married bride of Pastor T. W. Medhurst. "According to the teaching of the apostle, 'The husband is the head of the wife.' Don't you try to be the head; but you be the neck, then you can turn the head whichever way you like"; or his advice to a bridegroom, "My dear friend, don't you begin to feel proud, because Paul says that the husband is the head of the wife. Solomon says that 'a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband,' and the crown is the top of the head. Still, the governing faculty should rest with the head; and the family will never be ordered aright unless we each keep our proper place." At another time he said, "I have seen husbands obeying their wives, but I have never much admired the conduct."

In dealing with undesirable visitors, C. H. Spurgeon was always very ready. Once in his earlier days an eccentric individual called upon the preacher to set him right in some points of doctrine, but failing to make any impression rose and said, "Then I will shake off the dust of my feet against you." "Please don't do that," replied C. H. Spurgeon, "you might make the carpet dirty; you will find a scraper and a mat at the front door, they will answer the purpose quite as well!"

All visitors, however, were not so harmless, and on several occasions the preacher had to do with dangerous lunatics who had escaped from asylums. "I have come to cut your throat," said a madman, who had by some means gained admission to the pastor's vestry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and the wild expression in his eyes showed that

it was no vain threat. "Have you?" said C. H. Spurgeon. "I would not do that if I were you; see what a mess it would make on the carpet." "I never thought of that," replied the man, and he quieted down and allowed himself to be led from the room.

Another madman went to the preacher's house and was admitted by C. H. Spurgeon himself. Directly the door was shut the man stood with his back against it and said, angrily, that he had come "to kill Mr. Spurgeon!" Assistance could not be summoned, and the situation might well have unnerved a strong man, for the lunatic had in his hand a stout cudgel which he waved threateningly. "You must mean my brother," said the pastor, knowing that if the man left the house he could be followed and seized. "His name is Spurgeon." "Ah!" replied the maniac, "it is the man that makes jokes that I mean to kill." "Then you must go to my brother, for he makes jokes." "No," rejoined the man after a pause, "I believe you are the man." Then he shouted, "Do you know the asylum at ———? That is where I live, and it takes ten men to hold me." The preacher was not terrified. Drawing himself up and assuming a threatening aspect he exclaimed, "Ten men! that is nothing; you don't know how strong I am. Give me that stick." The madman was cowed instantly, and as he handed over the cudgel C. H. Spurgeon shouted, "If you are not out of the house this very moment I'll break every bone in your body." The man fled, and information being given to the police it was not very long before he was overtaken and captured.

More serious was the case of another lunatic who found his way into C. H. Spurgeon's presence at Mentone. The preacher was lying very ill at the time, and his friends having gone out for a little exercise no help was at hand.



(Photo by Mr. F. Johnson.)

C. H. Spurgeon's Vestry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

The madman rushed in and shouted, "I want you to save my soul." The invalid bade the man kneel down and prayed with him, after which he told him to go away and return in half-an-hour's time. The lunatic went, and C. H. Spurgeon rang for the doctor and servants, who chased the man, but were unable to seize him before he had stabbed someone in the street.

An undesirable visitor, the real motive for whose call upon the preacher seems uncertain, was a young man who posed as the son of Henry Ward Beecher. After being conducted over the house and grounds, he suddenly asked if C. H. Spurgeon could cash a cheque for him. The pastor's suspicions were instantly aroused, and he said, "I do not think you ought to make such a request to me. If you are really Mr. Beecher's son, you must be able, through the American Consul or some friend, to get your cheque cashed without coming to a complete stranger." The young man departed, but a few days later C. H. Spurgeon saw in a newspaper the portrait of a man who had murdered an old gentleman in a carriage on the Brighton Railway, and the assassin was none other than the visitor who had called upon the preacher.

With the growth of London, Nightingale Lane, Clapham, became very different from the secluded spot it once was, and the preacher's medical attendants were constantly advising him to get farther away from the fogs of the Metropolis. He himself, too, felt the necessity of removing to a quieter neighbourhood, but he took no steps in the matter until in 1880 a combination of circumstances led him to the conclusion that he was again the subject of an interposition of God. Driving down Beulah Hill, Norwood, one day, after making a business call in the district, C. H. Spurgeon saw by a notice on the gate that a small



"Westwood," Charles Haddon Spurgeon's home at Norwood.

estate was for sale, and stopping his carriage obtained permission to go over the property. As soon as he caught sight of the house, however, he exclaimed, "Oh! that place is far too grand for me!" and after a cursory inspection gave up all idea of trying to purchase the place, and resumed his journey home. He sent no one to the sale, but shortly afterwards the agents wrote him a letter saying that the reserve price had not been reached, and asking if he cared to make an offer for the property. That very day he had an application from a neighbour who wanted to purchase Helensburgh House for a relative returning from abroad. The pastor felt that this was more than coincidence, and he agreed that if he could get for his old house anything approaching the sum required for the purchase of the new, he should be glad to make the exchange. After a consultation he mentioned what he thought was a fair value for the Nightingale Lane house, and this was at once agreed to by the neighbour. Charles Haddon Spurgeon then drove to Norwood, and finding that he was well able to meet the difference in the prices of the two houses, the old home was sold and the new one bought.

All sorts of wild stories began to be published about this very ordinary transaction. It was stated that the preacher's people had presented him with a new house, and exaggerated descriptions of the magnificence of "Westwood" might have led people to suppose that C. H. Spurgeon had acquired a baronial castle with a vast estate. Indeed, one American journal gave such a glowing account from the pen of a "Doctor of Divinity," of the park and meadows, and lakes and streams, and statuary and stables that, as Mrs. Spurgeon has remarked, these might have been supposed to rival those of the Queen at Windsor Castle. As a matter of fact, the "park" was

comprised of less than nine acres, three of which were leasehold, and the "lakes and streams" consisted of one small piece of water.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon appreciated the increase of room in his new home. The commodious drawing-room became the library, and another large room the study, so that he had ample space for arranging his books in a convenient and accessible manner. Being much farther



The Lake at "Westwood."

out of London than Clapham, too, the preacher was able to take more enjoyable drives, and a favourite route was over the Shirley Hills and through Addington Park. The Archbishop of Canterbury and Mrs. Benson were friends and admirers of the Tabernacle pastor, who received each year from his Grace a card giving the right of free passage through the private grounds at Addington, and here C. H. Spurgeon was entertained to luncheon or tea on several

occasions. Once when the pastor accepted an invitation to lunch, Dr. Benson pointed to his butler and footman and said, "There are two members of your congregation, Mr. Spurgeon. When I am in residence at Lambeth, they always go to the Tabernacle. I don't blame them, for I would do the same myself if I had the chance. When your coachman gets round to the stables he will recognize another Tabernacle attendant; and I can truly say that they are all a credit to the instruction they receive from you."

Another member of the episcopal bench, who was a close friend of C. H. Spurgeon, was Dr. Thorold, Bishop of Rochester, and the two distinguished men often visited one another. It was usual for the Bishop, when the time approached to prepare the addresses for his annual visitation, to invite the Pastor of the Tabernacle to spend a quiet day with him at Selsdon Park in prayer and conversation upon spiritual topics; and similar seasons of mutual help took place at Westwood. Both preachers enjoyed and benefited by these meetings. "We have had such a delightful time of talk and prayer together," C. H. Spurgeon remarked more than once after an interview of this kind, and when he had taken tea with the Bishop at Selsdon, the prelate wrote, "We all have a most charming impression of your visit. Next time you come I shall try to pick your brains about preaching."

Distinguished men were constantly seeking to be introduced to the great preacher, through mutual friends, and although up to his eyes in work, C. H. Spurgeon usually found time for the solicited interviews. Many close friendships were begun in this way. Bishop Welldon (then headmaster of Dulwich College), who attended the Tabernacle several times, was very anxious to know C. H.

Spurgeon personally, and he was introduced by Mr. John Cook. An intimate friendship sprang up, and when the preacher heard that Dr. Welldon's grandmother greatly prized his sermons, he sent a note to her through the headmaster. In reply, Dr. Welldon wrote, "I am deeply grateful for your kind thought of my grandmother. Nothing, I think, could cheer her so much in her last days as this word from you. It will, perhaps, be a little interesting to you to know that some years ago, when I was about to live in Germany, she put into my hands several volumes of your sermons, and made me promise to read one every Sunday morning until I came home, as she thought, poor dear! that senior classics were sure to be sceptical, and ever since then I have been a student of your writings, so that I suppose there are few members of the English Church who know them better or owe more to them than I do."

This chapter must not be closed without a reference to the Earl of Shaftesbury, whose visits to Westwood were very frequent, and who probably had no closer friend than the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. C. H. Spurgeon sent the Earl most of his books as they came out, and in acknowledging some of these on one occasion, and expressing thanks for the preacher's inscription, he wrote, "I shall add my own—a prayer that my descendants will cherish the volumes as the gift of a man whom their ancestor honoured and loved as a private friend, but far more as a powerful, bold, true and single-hearted servant of our most blessed Lord and Saviour."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DOWNGRADE CONTROVERSY.

THE time has not yet come when anything like a complete history of the "Downgrade Controversy" can be written. Many of those who took a prominent part in the affair are still living, and the personal element was allowed to intrude itself so largely into the discussion that to deal with the matter here at all exhaustively would only re-open old wounds and serve no useful purpose. All through his ministry Charles Haddon Spurgeon had been zealous in upholding the authority of the Scriptures, and in battling with what he considered serious error regarding the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. His action in connection with the "Rivulet Controversy," and the discussion over the Rev. Baldwin Brown's "Divine Life in Man," showed that he was particularly hostile to the preaching and teaching of modern theological opinions by men who had entered the ministry while subscribing actually or in effect to orthodox creeds, and when it became manifest that many preachers in his own denomination and outside held views respecting the inspiration and accuracy of the Bible, the person of Christ, the Atonement, the Future Life and other doctrines, quite opposed to those which orthodox Christians had held for centuries, he believed the time had come to speak out and warn the Christian world of its danger in tolerating such teaching.

This movement or tendency he named the "Downgrade," and after giving a history of its growth in *The Sword and the Trowel* for August, 1887, he published an important article dealing with the matter as it affected the present day. This was really the beginning of the controversy. The writer described the days as evil, and said that things were much worse in many churches than they seemed to be, and were rapidly tending downward. "The Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Spirit is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into a fiction, and the resurrection into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren and maintain a confederacy with them." The results of the new teaching were said to be manifest on all hands, and included a decline of spiritual life, a taste for questionable amusements, and a weariness of devotional services, whilst the value of prayer-meetings was doubted. "The fact is that many would like to unite church and stage, cards and prayer, dancing and sacraments. If we are powerless to stem this torrent we can at least warn men of its existence and entreat them to keep out of it." Avowed atheists, the writer emphatically declared, were not a tithe as dangerous as those preachers who scattered doubt and stabbed at faith. "Attendance at places of worship is declining and reverence for holy things is vanishing, and we solemnly believe this to be largely attributable to the scepticism which has flashed from the pulpit and spread among the people. Possibly the men who uttered the doubt never intended it to go so far; but none the less they have done the ill and cannot undo it."

But the most important statement in the article was that which forecasted the future action of the great Baptist

preacher. "It now becomes a serious question," he wrote, "how far those who abide by the faith once delivered to the saints should fraternize with those who have turned aside to another Gospel. Christian love has its claims, and divisions are to be shunned as grievous evils; but how far are we justified in being in confederacy with those who are departing from the truth? It is a difficult question to answer so as to keep the balance of the duties.



The Fernery at "Westwood."

For the present it behoves believers to be cautious, lest they lend their support and countenance to the betrayers of the Lord. It is one thing to overleap all boundaries of denominational restriction for the truth's sake; this we hope all godly men will do more and more. It is quite another policy which would urge us to subordinate the maintenance of truth to denominational prosperity and

unity. Numbers of easy-minded people wink at error so long as it is committed by a clever man and a good-natured brother who has so many fine points about him. Let each believer judge for himself; but for our part we have put on a few fresh bolts to our door, and we have given orders to keep the chain up; for under colour of begging the friendship of the servant there are those about who aim at robbing the Master."

The article concluded with an expression of fear that it was hopeless ever to form a society which could keep out men base enough to profess one thing and believe another; but a hope was entertained that an informal alliance might be possible among all who held the Christianity of their fathers. "Little as they might be able to do," said the writer, "they could at least protest, and as far as possible free themselves of that complicity which will be involved in a conspiracy of silence. If for a while the evangelicals are doomed to go down, let them die fighting, and in the full assurance that their Gospel will have a resurrection when the inventions of 'modern thought' shall be burned up with fire unquenchable."

This article from the pen of the great preacher created a sensation not only in his own denomination, but in the churches generally. Many thought that this was his earliest action in connection with the matter, and loudly blamed him for not first going to the officials of his denomination and putting the subject before them. As a matter of fact, C. H. Spurgeon had on various occasions brought the matter before the notice of succeeding Presidents of the Baptist Union, but the subject was shelved, and he only made his public protest when it was clear that otherwise no action would be taken. Even then he felt hope, believing that so far as the Baptists were concerned, com-

paratively few ministers were affected by the "new theology." To his surprise, however, the controversy and correspondence in the various religious journals which followed his protest revealed the fact that large numbers of preachers hitherto regarded as orthodox were "higher critics," believed in the "larger hope," and held other views opposed to the traditional Baptist creed. In C. H. Spurgeon's opinion, men holding such beliefs, however pleasing their personalities might be, should not be associated in fellowship with orthodox divines, as was the case in the Baptist Union. The doctrines of the two were so utterly opposed as to leave little or nothing in common between the two classes of ministers.

Those who disagreed with C. H. Spurgeon were not united among themselves. Many declared that the alleged evil was almost non-existent, while others denied that it was an evil at all, and declared that there should be room in the union for ministers of varying views. To prove his point, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, in the next number of *The Sword and the Trowel* (October), quoted letters which were appearing in the religious journals, and asked, "Are brethren who remain orthodox prepared to endorse such sentiments by remaining in union with those who hold and teach them? These gentlemen have full liberty to think as they like; but, on the other hand, those who love the old Gospel have equally the liberty to dissociate themselves from them, and that liberty also involves a responsibility from which there is no escaping."

What action should be taken officially he left "to those who can see more plainly than we do what Israel ought to do," but so far as he himself was concerned, the writer had made up his mind. "One thing is clear to us: we cannot be expected to meet in any union which compre-

hends those whose teaching is upon fundamental points exactly the reverse of that which we hold dear. Those who *can* do so will no doubt have weighty reasons with which to justify their action, and we will not sit in judgment upon those reasons; they may judge that a minority should not drive them out. To us it appears that there are many things upon which compromise is impossible, but there are others in which it would be an act of treason to pretend to fellowship. With deep regret we abstain from assembling with those whom we dearly love and heartily respect, since it would involve us in a confederacy with those with whom we can have no communion in the Lord."

A month later he writes that he is tired of the whole business. The flood of correspondence which continued to pour forth through the religious Press served largely to becloud the issue, and there was much misunderstanding, if not misrepresentation, of C. H. Spurgeon's motives. One desires to be charitable, but after an examination of the records of the period, published and unpublished, it needs a pretty large charity to use the former rather than the latter word. However, the Pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle found it necessary again and again to explain his position, so that he might not be wrongly judged by the false position into which the statements of his opponents would have placed him. "Believers in Christ's Atonement," he wrote in *The Sword and the Trowel* for November, "are now in declared religious union with those who make light of it; believers in Holy Scripture are in confederacy with those who deny plenary inspiration; those who hold evangelical doctrine are in open alliance with those who call the Fall a fable, who deny the personality of the Holy Ghost, who call justification

by faith immoral, and hold that there is another probation after death and a future restitution for the lost."

The writer recorded it as his solemn conviction that where there could be no real spiritual communion there should be no pretence of fellowship. "Fellowship with known and vital error," he said, "is participation in sin. Those who know and love the truth of God cannot have fellowship with that which is diametrically opposed thereto, and there can be no reason why they should pretend that they have such fellowship." Many ministers had written or spoken to C. H. Spurgeon, asking him what course they should take, but he disclaimed any right to dictate to others. "Each one," he said, "must act for himself, after seeking direction of the Lord. In our own case we intimated our course of action in last month's paper. We retire at once, and distinctly, from the Baptist Union. The Baptist churches are each one of them self-contained and independent. The Baptist Union is only a voluntary Association of such churches, and it is a simple matter for a church or an individual to withdraw from it. The Union as at present constituted has no disciplinary power, for it has no doctrinal basis whatever, and we see no reason why every form of belief and misbelief should not be comprehended in it, so long as immersion only is acknowledged as baptism. There is no use in blaming the Union for harbouring errors of the extremest kind, for so far as we can see it is powerless to help itself, if it even wished to do so. Those who originally founded it made it 'without form and void,' and so it must remain. At least we do not see any likelihood of a change. A large number have this state of things in admiration, and will go on with it; we have no such admiration, and therefore have ceased from it. But we



(Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)

A Painting of the Baptism of Christ which hung in the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

want outsiders to know that we are in no-wise altered in our faith or in our denominational position. As a baptized believer our place is where it has ever been."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon's withdrawal from the Baptist Union, and also from the London Baptist Association, was severely condemned by many, and the Council of the Union passed a vote of censure upon his action. This the preacher could not quite understand, because at the very time of the censure the Council was supposed to be discussing matters with him, and not long before had sent four doctors of divinity "to deliberate how the unity of the denomination can be maintained in truth and love and good works." Impartial onlookers must therefore own that in the circumstances the censure was, to say the least, premature. C. H. Spurgeon defended his own withdrawal from the Union on the ground that he could bring no charges before the Council, as under its constitution, which laid down no doctrinal basis except the belief that "the immersion of believers is the only Christian baptism," no one could be heterodox unless he should forswear his baptism. This statement was disputed, and C. H. Spurgeon offered to pay the fee for counsel's opinion to show that he was correct in his view, but the offer was not accepted. If his reading of the constitution was right, then, obviously, as he says, there was nothing for him to work upon, whatever evidence he might bring.

What Charles Haddon Spurgeon had asked was that the Baptist Union should be formed "on a Scriptural basis." "I never sought to intrude upon it any Calvinistic or other personal creed, but only that form of belief which has been accepted for many years by the Evangelical Alliance, which includes members of well-nigh all Christian communities." The Council objected to any creed, but, as

C. H. Spurgeon pointed out, every Union, unless it be a mere fiction, must be based upon certain principles. "How can we unite," he asked, "except upon some great common truths? And the doctrine of baptism by immersion is not sufficient for a groundwork. Surely, to be a Baptist is not everything. If I disagree with a man on ninety-nine points, but happen to be one with him in baptism, this can never furnish such ground of unity as I have with another with whom I believe in ninety-nine points, and only happen to differ upon one ordinance." He could not understand how persons who held positions connected with churches and institutions, having creeds, could fairly object to such creeds when they met in a united character, for, as he pointed out, the trust-deeds of chapels and colleges usually have some doctrinal declaration, and even the Baptist Union itself had a creed about baptism.

Here practically the matter rested, so far as the Union was concerned. A small number of ministers withdrew after C. H. Spurgeon, but the majority remained. From the orthodox point of view, however, the great preacher's protest did good, for it aroused evangelical ministers of all denominations, and large numbers wrote thanking C. H. Spurgeon for his fearlessness in maintaining amid censure and opposition those fundamental truths which were taught by the orthodox in all ages. What it cost him, however, to be hurled in the midst of such a conflict, at a time when continued illness had wearied and exhausted him, none but those who were in close intimacy with him can know. "This struggle is killing me," he said to Pastor Ellis, when the latter bade him good-bye just before sailing for Australia. Many of the great preacher's friends left him and "walked no more with him." For a time it looked as

though the various agencies connected with the Tabernacle would suffer severely through the withdrawal of support by one and another. But the preacher never lost his faith. He prayed more earnestly, and other and new friends stepped into the places of those who had failed. Once at Mentone, when perplexed by a financial difficulty resulting from loss of subscriptions through the Downgrade controversy, a lady visited him and presented a cheque for a hundred pounds. She declared that while in London she had been impressed in some mysterious and unmistakable way that she must go to Mentone and give the preacher a sum of money towards his work. "It is as nearly a miracle as anything I ever heard of," he wrote to a deacon. About a week later another cheque for a hundred pounds was received.

With many of the Baptist ministers who continued in the Union, C. H. Spurgeon remained on friendly terms to the close of his life. "Do I need to say," he wrote to Dr. Culross, President of the Baptist Union, in November, 1887, "that with you and such brethren as Dr. McLaren, Mr. Aldis and Mr. Angus, I have no sort of disagreement, except that you stay in the Union and I am out of it? We shall according to our light labour for the same cause. We are all Christians and Baptists, and can find many ways of co-operation." Again, in the same letter, he declared, "I am in fellowship with *you*—Union or no Union." Dr. Culross had written kindly to C. H. Spurgeon, and the latter appreciated the courtesy of the former, so different from many who took the pastor of the Tabernacle to task. "I think it most kind of you to write to me," he said. "Your brethren have usually fired at me through the newspapers their loving appeals and advices."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon never changed his views in regard to the Downgrade Controversy. To the end he was firmly convinced that the position he had taken up was the right one, and, though all men should have forsaken him, he would still have done what he believed to be his duty. "The error in the Baptist denomination is ten times more widely spread than we knew of when we wrote the 'Downgrade' papers," he declared, some time after his secession from the Union; "and we are bound not to withdraw a syllable, but to emphasize each word with all our might."

One thing is certain that, from the human point of view, the great preacher's death was hastened by the bitterness of the struggle—a struggle which, at such a time, in the midst of weariness and sickness, he was ill-fitted to sustain.

CHAPTER XXX.

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON AS AN AUTHOR.

AN important phase of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's life remains to be dealt with, a phase in some senses the most remarkable of all. That so constant and untiring a preacher, who had the pastoral care of the largest church in Christendom upon his shoulders, and at the same time originated and mainly directed a vast multitude of religious agencies and institutions, should find time to write books at all, is surprising, but that those books should be of so original a character and of so high a quality as to command for them an extensive sale a dozen years after the writer's death is little short of amazing. Exclusive of the yearly volumes of sermons, which will be referred to later, and of the volumes of *The Sword and the Trowel* which he edited, and in which he wrote extensively, there are in Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster's catalogue something like a hundred and fifty volumes standing against the name of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Many of these works, such as "The Treasury of David" and "The Salt Cellars," are the result of careful and patient research extending over years. whilst others, like "John Ploughman's Talk," and "John Ploughman's Pictures," strike an entirely new vein in the way of religious appeal. Then as to the style of writing, this varies from the simplicity of "Around the Wicket-Gate," which a child could understand, to the more pro-

found diction of, say, the commentary on the Psalms, intended for the use of preachers; and from the plain, homely language of the "Ploughman" series, to the beautifully finished sentences of the Communion meditations in "Till He Come," where each paper is in reality a delightful prose poem. Writing was to C. H. Spurgeon as laborious a task as preaching was a pleasure, and yet he did most of his writing during periods of convalescence, when work of the kind must have proved doubly irksome. But in this, as in all else, he looked to the end rather than the means, and the knowledge which the author received from time to time, that his books were proving helpful to others was sufficient incentive to him to continue the use of his pen. In writing, as in preaching, C. H. Spurgeon had a wonderful command of language, and it may be truly said of him, as of Chaucer, that he was a "well of English undefyled." To acquire a plain, simple style of composition, and to realise how the deepest thoughts can be conveyed in pure Anglo-Saxon, one could not do better than read Spurgeon's writings.

The circulation of the great preacher's books established a record which is never likely to be surpassed. No other writer, much less an author of religious works, has, in his lifetime, had the satisfaction of seeing his books so widely read, and that they continue to be bought in large numbers to the present day is a proof that they possess a freshness and a virility not confined to the period in which they were written. Taking the eight most popular of his works, over a million volumes of these have been sold, and of one, "John Ploughman's Talk," nearly half a million copies have been issued. Nor does the statement about extensive circulations apply only to the cheaper books. The more expensive works have been almost equally acceptable.

Of "The Treasury of David," for instance, published in seven volumes at 8s. each, no fewer than 148,000 volumes have been sold. The readers, too, have not been of the masses only; they have included all classes—royal personages, bishops, university professors, eminent literary men and peers of the realm—and few writers of religious books have obtained such a mixed following, socially, educationally, and religiously.

Of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's literary works the *magnum opus* is undoubtedly "The Treasury of David," already referred to. It comprises an original exposition of the Book of Psalms, a collection of illustrative extracts from the whole range of literature, a series of homiletical hints upon almost every verse, and lists of writers upon each Psalm. The task of preparing this, the most voluminous work on the Psalms extant, occupied twenty years, and in collecting the extracts the preacher was assisted by his amanuensis, Mr. J. L. Keys, and by the late Dr. Gracey, of the Pastors' College. Some idea of the labour involved may be gathered from the fact that nearly four hundred authors were quoted from, or referred to, in the first volume alone, and oftentimes to get one thought briefly stated, a whole volume of prosy, pointless matter had to be carefully examined. C. H. Spurgeon's own expositions, like his sermons, are pithy, and rich in original thought, and each volume contains suggestions which can be used as outlines for a multitude of sermons. The first volume was published in 1870, and the others followed at irregular intervals, the preacher being often hindered by ill-health. When at last the great work was finished, C. H. Spurgeon wrote in his preface to the final volume: "And now the colossal work is done! To God be all glory! More than twenty years have glided away while this pleasant labour

has been in the doing ; but the wealth of mercy that has been lavished on me during that time my grateful heart is unable to measure Surely goodness and mercy have



C. H. Spurgeon, from a photo taken in the New Forest during a holiday tour. It was of this picture that the great preacher said, "I like the photograph better than any portrait ever taken of me."

followed me all these years and made my heart sing new psalms for new mercies. There is none like the God of Jeshurun. To Him be all glory for ever and ever!"

After "The Treasury of David," C. H. Spurgeon's chief expository works are "The Interpreter, or Scripture for Family Worship," a selection of passages from the Word of God for every morning and evening throughout the year, with running commentary, written mostly during a holiday in the New Forest; and "The Gospel of the Kingdom: a Popular Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew," upon which he was engaged at the time of his death. This commentary was completed by his private secretary, with quotations from the preacher's sermons and writings.

Among the devotional works of the distinguished preacher, "Morning and Evening Daily Readings" will always hold first place. The readings, published in one pocket volume, and also in two volumes of larger type, are not a series of extracts from sermons, but were specially written for the purpose for which they are intended. In the preface to the evening portion, the author said, "We have striven to keep out of the common track, and hence we have selected unusual texts and have brought forward neglected subjects. The vice of many religious works is their dulness;—from this fault we have striven to be free, our friends must judge how far we have succeeded." There is no doubt about the success, and none of his books show C. H. Spurgeon's freshness of thought more than this. It is amazing how a man who during his ministry preached three or four thousand sermons, each a masterpiece of originality, could in these volumes of daily readings give what really amount to seven hundred and thirty-two sermon outlines, full of suggestive thought and teaching. There is not a single page but could be used as the skeleton for an address, and many of the readings cover quite untrodden fields.

"The Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith," another

devotional work, has proved helpful to large numbers of people in trouble and distress. It consists of a collection of Scripture promises, which comforted and sustained C. H. Spurgeon himself during the Downgrade Controversy, and these he afterwards arranged for daily use, adding brief experimental comments.

But the literary work by which the great preacher will be remembered longest is undoubtedly "John Ploughman's Talk" (with, of course, the supplementary volume, "John Ploughman's Pictures"). As Dr. James Stalker has said of this, it "is a collection of wit and wisdom that is certain of immortality among the popular classics of England." Like Martin Luther, C. H. Spurgeon early in life read a large quantity of children's songs and stories, that he might perfect himself in simplicity of language, and here he has penned plain and pure English, such as has not been excelled since Bunyan. "I have written," he says, "for ploughmen and common people. Hence, refined taste and dainty words have been discarded for strong proverbial expressions and homely phrases. I have aimed my blows at the vices of the many and tried to inculcate those moral virtues without which men are degraded. Much that needs to be said to the toiling masses would not well suit the pulpit and the Sabbath; these lowly pages may teach thrift and industry all the days of the week in the cottage and the workshop; and if some learn these lessons I shall not repent the adoption of a rustic style. *Ploughman* is a name I may justly claim. Every minister has put his hand to the plough: and it is his business to break up the fallow ground. That I have written in a semi-humorous vein needs no apology, since thereby sound moral teaching has gained a hearing from at least 300,000 persons. There is no particular virtue in being seriously

unreadable. A pickle-jar has these words upon it, 'If you like our pickles, try our sauce,' and so I would add, 'If you like "John Ploughman's Talk," try his "Pictures." ' "

The papers of which the volumes consist were originally published anonymously in *The Sword and the Trowel*, and there was much speculation as to the authorship. The



"The Red Lion" Inn at Ockley, where C. H. Spurgeon often stayed, and where much of "John Ploughman's Talk" was written.

greater number of them were written at "The Red Lion" Inn, Ockley, where C. H. Spurgeon was a frequent visitor, and as they came out in the magazine the preacher used to read them to his students to see the effect they had. One of these, however, soon guessed the authorship. "John

Ploughman's Talk," like many others of C. H. Spurgeon's books, has been translated into several languages, and some years ago the German Empress purchased a copy, together with the "Morning and Evening Readings," from a colporteur who was vending the German editions.

Of a somewhat similar character to the "Ploughman" volumes are "The Salt Cellars, a collection of proverbs, with homely notes thereon." For many years C. H. Spurgeon had compiled a sheet-almanack for workshops and kitchens, which was known as "John Ploughman's Almanack," and was intended to promote temperance, thrift, kindness to animals, and a regard for religion among the working classes. Naturally the accumulation of proverbs over a course of twenty years was very great, and had involved much labour which it seemed to the preacher a pity to waste. He therefore made a selection from his stock and published these in two volumes, the collection being of the greatest value to preachers and teachers. One paper, in reviewing the work, said; "The proverbs are excellent; but Mr. Spurgeon's comments are perfect." The preacher sent the volumes to his friend, Dr. Thorold, Bishop of Rochester, who replied: "I thank you exceedingly for your valued gift. 'The Salt Cellars' shall have an opportunity of sparkling in my sermons, and I shall begin to read 'The Cheque-book of the Bank of Faith' to-day."

In connection with "John Ploughman's Almanack" there is a story worth telling. The editor of a Church of England magazine put into his pages each month the whole of the proverbs for that month from the almanack without any acknowledgment. "I wondered how long that kind of thing was going on," says C. H. Spurgeon, "so I wrote to the editor to say that it was a very bright idea for him to take all my friend 'John Ploughman's' proverbs in that

way, and print them in his magazine as he was doing, but that I was instructed by 'John Ploughman' to say that he was not to do it any longer. The editor wrote back to ask what he should do, because he had begun printing the proverbs, and he should like to publish them in his magazine right through the year. I said, 'Well, if you do so, you ought to say that you took them from me. If you do that you will be a gentleman and a Christian and I will say nothing more about the matter; but as that is, perhaps, too much to expect from you, you may simply put the names of the publishers and say that the proverbs are "John Ploughman's," and then my name will not defile your pages.' It seems almost incredible, but the gentleman actually accepted the second alternative." There is scarcely any need to mention that this occurred just after the Baptismal Regeneration controversy.

Another class of books very characteristic of the author were those consisting of illustrations, original and selected, compiled principally for the use of preachers and teachers. Perhaps the best of these bears the apt title, "Feathers for Arrows." "My aim," wrote C. H. Spurgeon, in the preface, "has not been to amuse the reader, but to furnish 'Feathers for Arrows' for the servants of Christ Jesus." The method of collecting the illustrations was typical of the man; no opportunities were missed and no time was wasted. "Whenever I have been permitted sufficient respite from my ministerial duties," he says, "to enjoy a lengthened tour, or even a short excursion, I have been in the habit of carrying with me a small 'Note Book,' in which I have jotted down any illustrations which have occurred to me by the way. My recreations have been all the more pleasant because I have made them subservient to my life work. The 'Note Book' has been useful in my

travels as a mental purse. If not fixed upon paper, ideas are apt to vanish with the occasion which suggested them. A word or two will suffice to bring an incident or train of



Mrs. C. H. Spurgeon in her boudoir, from a photograph taken at the time of her husband's jubilee.

thought to remembrance; and therefore it would be inexcusable in a minister who needs so much not to preserve all that comes in his way. From the pencil marks of the

pocket book my notes have been enlarged into more permanent manuscript, and have been of great service to me. Out of the hundreds of metaphors and anecdotes thus collected I have used the main body in my constant sermonisings; but as enough remained unused to make me feel competently rich in illustrations, I determined to offer a portion of my hoard to my fellow-workers, feeling the less difficulty in so doing because the ingatherings of continual observation more than replace the material expended in this distribution."

It was scarcely carrying out the spirit, however, of C. H. Spurgeon's intentions, even if the letter was obeyed, when a Church of England magazine published month after month extracts from "Feathers for Arrows," and put at the bottom of each, "By an Old Author." This, like the Almanack incident, occurred soon after the Baptismal Regeneration sermon, which no doubt accounted for the sudden antiquarian character that the book assumed.

A somewhat similar volume is "Illustrations and Meditations: or, Flowers from a Puritan's Garden, Distilled and Dispensed by C. H. Spurgeon." The history of this book is interesting. While commenting upon the 119th Psalm, the preacher was brought into intimate communion with Thomas Manton, and came to know the old Puritan so well that he tells us he could "choose him out from among a thousand divines." Manton used but few figures and illustrations, and knowing that these must be unusually forcible, C. H. Spurgeon went through volume after volume marking the metaphors. Then he selected the best and used them as texts for brief meditations. The latter were composed in the gardens and olive groves of Mentone, and the preacher's wish that the sentences might be flooded

with the sunlight of that charming region has certainly been fulfilled.

Among the illustrative volumes must be placed "Sermons in Candles," which sets forth some of the lessons to be learnt from common candles. In addressing his college students one day, the preacher urged upon them the advantage of using plenty of illustrations in their sermons, even as the Saviour Himself did, whereupon a student remarked that it was difficult to get illustrations in any great abundance. "Yes," said C. H. Spurgeon, "if you do not wake up, but go through the world asleep, you cannot see illustrations; but if your minds were thoroughly aroused, and yet you could see nothing else in the world but a single tallow candle, you might find enough illustrations in that luminary to last you for six months." Some of the young men appearing sceptical, the preacher promised to prove his words, and soon afterwards delivered an object-lesson upon candles. The lecture was seized upon by many speakers, who delivered it with variations all over the kingdom, and, after a quarter-of-a-century, C. H. Spurgeon decided to publish it in book form. It was greatly amplified and divided so as to form two lectures. The book contained an amusing reference to those who had used his address up and down the country without acknowledgment. "This lecture of mine," wrote the author, "has proved a boon to several other public instructors, who have largely used it and possibly have improved upon the original. I am sure they have not been more free than welcome. As I have taken out no letters patent, I have never called upon them for a royalty for the use of my invention. Still, if their consciences trouble them, I am like Matthew, 'at the receipt of custom.' I have now resolved to print my lecture; and I hope those gentle-

men will not be angry with me for stopping their borrowing, but the rather I trust they will think me generous for having refrained from publishing the lecture for so long a period as five-and-twenty years. These candles have now become 'ancient lights,' but I do not propose to prevent anybody's building near the premises; for they will not block up my light. These symbols have light in themselves which cannot be hid. My friends can go on delivering their own versions all the same; and if they think fit, they may use the original text also."

In "The Bible and the Newspaper," C. H. Spurgeon gave another instance of his fertility in the use of illustration. Taking a number of paragraphs from the daily papers, he deduced from these pointed spiritual lessons and, like the "Sermons in Candles," this little book is in itself an object-lesson in the art of illustration.

Several of the preacher's popular lectures, besides "Sermons in Candles," were expanded and published as books. Among these were "Southwark," "The Two Wesleys," and "Eccentric Preachers." The latter, in the form of newspaper reports, had been so mutilated that C. H. Spurgeon refused to own it, and out of self-defence decided to publish the lecture. The volume became very popular, and is still sold largely.

Reference has already been made in the chapter dealing with the Pastors' College, to the lectures that C. H. Spurgeon delivered to his students, and the sound common sense and invaluable hints to the aspiring preacher which they contained. These have been published in four volumes—three entitled "Lectures to my Students" (first, second and third series), and the fourth, "Commenting and Commentaries," consisting of two lectures and an exhaustive catalogue of Biblical Commentaries and Expositi-



The Library at "Westwood."

tions. An enormous number of these volumes has been bought by ministers and students of all denominations, and the late Bishop of Liverpool, Dr. Ryle, wrote to the author, soon after the first volume was issued: "You want no praise of man, and you know its worthlessness. But I must tell you how much I like your 'Lectures to Students.' I have rarely seen so many nails hit right on the head. I should like to give a copy to every young clergyman in the Church of England."

A brief mention must be made of those unequalled books for "seekers," "Around the Wicket Gate," and "All of Grace," which have been the means of spiritual blessing to thousands. This was the sole object of the author in penning them, and believing that many poor men and women would take up the volumes, he used the very plainest language and freely introduced homely expressions. "But," he says in the preface to "All of Grace" (which has been translated into many languages, including Urdu), "if those of wealth and rank should glance at this book, the Holy Ghost can impress them also; since that which can be understood by the unlettered is none the less attractive to the instructed. Oh, that some may read it who will become great winners of souls!"

Other books, such as "The Clue of the Maze: a Voice Lifted up on Behalf of Honest Faith" (written at Mentone), and "According to Promise; or, the Method of the Lord's Dealing with His Chosen People," were penned to confirm the faith of those who had already passed "from darkness to light."

A number of volumes of extracts has also been compiled from the preacher's sermons, note-books and other sources. Chief among these may be mentioned "Flashes of Thought," containing a thousand extracts from C. H.

Spurgeon's works, "Spurgeon's Gems," a similar work of smaller size, "Barbed Arrows from the Quiver of C. H. Spurgeon," collected and edited by the preacher's son Charles, "Spurgeon Anecdotes," and "Glorious Themes for Saints and Sinners," the latter printed in specially large type for the use of the aged. Even at the present time, nearly a dozen years after the death of the preacher, new volumes are being prepared, and several of his earlier works have been reprinted. "Smooth Stones taken from Ancient Brooks," the little volume in compiling which his wife (then his *fiancée*) helped him soon after he came to London, has just been made available for the younger generation of readers in this way.

A word must be said about *The Sword and the Trowel*, C. H. Spurgeon's monthly magazine, which, as already stated, was the direct cause of the founding of the Stockwell Orphanage and the Colportage Association. When the work at the Tabernacle began to expand so amazingly the pastor felt that it would be of real assistance to have a special organ of his own—a magazine which should interest friends in the various institutions connected with his church, and which at the same time should provide interesting and instructive reading for Christian families. It was therefore decided to publish a threepenny magazine monthly, and, seeing that this was to be "a Record of Combat with Sin and Labour for the Lord," the appropriate title of *The Sword and the Trowel* was selected, the reference, of course, being to the building of the walls of Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah, when "every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon" (Nehemiah iv. 17).

In his opening article the editor wrote: "Our monthly message will be a supplement to our weekly sermon, and

will enable us to say many things which would be out of place in a discourse. It will inform the general Christian public of our movements and show our sympathy with all that is good throughout the entire Church of God. It will give us an opportunity of urging the claims of Christ's cause, of advocating the revival of godliness, of denouncing error, of bearing witness for the truth, and of encouraging the labourers in the Lord's vineyard. We do not pretend to be unsectarian—if by this term be meant the absence of all distinctive principles and a desire to please parties of all shades of opinion. We believe, and therefore speak. We speak in love; but not in soft words and trimming sentences. We shall not court controversy, but we shall not shun it when the cause of God demands it."

From its inception until within a short period of his death, C. H. Spurgeon actively edited *The Sword and the Trowel*, reading all the manuscripts that were received, and correcting many of the proof-pages. But his work did not stop here; for during more than a quarter-of-a-century he himself wrote a very large proportion of the magazine. Ill or well, at home or abroad, he always found time to devote to his periodical, and its character for vitality and brightness may be gathered from the fact that it was once spoken of in the House of Lords as "a lively newspaper." For twelve years since his death, C. H. Spurgeon has continued to speak from the pages of *The Sword and the Trowel*, hitherto unpublished articles of his appearing in the monthly numbers to the present time.

Of course, many of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's books consist of sermons and addresses, but it must not be thought from this fact that the preacher had little or no work to do as an author. Although such addresses were taken down by shorthand writers, the manuscripts were in

all cases carefully edited by the preacher, who usually made such copious additions as to render the volumes entirely new works. No doubt the phenomenal success of the books was to a large degree due to the author's fame as a preacher, yet there is no doubt that had C. H. Spurgeon devoted himself entirely to literature, and never entered a pulpit, his remarkable gifts would have still made him one of the most successful of authors. Those who think he made money out of his church never erred more sadly. He gave away each year probably twice and thrice as much as his ministerial salary. Had he saved all the money that came to him as a result of his literary work he might have died an immensely rich man. But in writing, as in preaching, his one desire was to help his fellows spiritually, and the royalties on the books were only looked upon as desirable because they enabled the author to give substantial monetary grants to all his numerous institutions.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE PRINTED SERMONS.

IF the success of C. H. Spurgeon's books was remarkable, what can be said of his printed sermons? For close upon fifty years they have been appearing, a fresh one each week, and although the preacher died in 1892 there are sufficient remaining unpublished to last for several years yet. "Penny Pulpits" there have been without number, but their existence has at the best been precarious, and even where the fare was varied by giving the discourses of different divines, readers have become tired after a few years, and the publication has had to cease. But here is a "Penny Pulpit" consisting entirely of one man's sermons, which, after an existence of half-a-century, and long after the death of the preacher, possesses all the vitality and freshness of youth, and circulates to such a prodigious extent as to eclipse everything that has ever been known in the history of printing. So vast, indeed, is the number of copies of C. H. Spurgeon's printed sermons that has been disposed of since "The New Park Street Pulpit" was inaugurated in 1855, that all count has been lost by the publishers; but it is estimated that no fewer than a hundred and fifty millions have been disposed of in this form alone! Then, remembering that the sermons have appeared in newspapers all over the world, and that they have been translated into nearly forty languages and published in many foreign countries, the

total number of Spurgeon's sermons issued in print during half-a-century must be between two and three hundred millions! The languages in which they are to be read range from the polished tongues of Europe to the primitive forms of language used in Africa, and include Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Bulgarian, Castilian (for the Argentine Republic), Chinese, Congo, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Esthonian, French, Gaelic, German, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Kaffir, Karen, Lettish, Maori, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, Servian, Spanish, Swedish, Syriac, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, and Welsh, with a few sermons in the Moon and Braille type for the blind.

On one occasion an order was given for a million copies of the sermons, whilst at another time a single individual purchased and distributed freely two hundred and fifty thousand copies; he had selections of these bound up into elaborate volumes and presented one to each of the sovereigns of Europe, and sent smaller volumes to all the students of the universities and to all the Members of both Houses of Parliament. Many admirers, quite unknown personally to Charles Haddon Spurgeon, took surprising pains and spent considerable sums in bringing the sermons before the public in this and other countries. In the very early days a city merchant belonging to the Society of Friends, quite as a labour of love, advertised the sermons in a large number of newspapers and journals and offered to supply them to applicants direct from his own office. Another gentleman, having obtained the preacher's permission, had a sermon printed each week in the advertisement columns of a number of Australian newspapers, so as to convey the Gospel to the isolated dwellers in the bush. The manager of one of the most influential of these journals—a sporting paper—having no sympathy with such a

scheme, charged the advertiser on the highest scale for the sermons, and, as C. H. Spurgeon once said, the gentleman spent week by week "a sum which we scarcely dare to mention, lest it should not be believed." After this had been going on for six or eight months the readers of the sporting paper in question were asked to express their



C. H. Spurgeon at fifty years of age.

opinion as to the usefulness or otherwise of continuing the publication, and in reply about four hundred letters were received, begging for their continuance, many of them containing remarkable testimonies of spiritual blessings received as a result of reading the sermons.

"I have been," wrote one man, "for five years or more,

one of those unfortunates who are commonly called 'swagmen.' Travelling about, a few months since, looking for employment, I came to a public-house by the roadside, into which I went for a drink and an hour's rest, as I was very tired. A newspaper was lying on the counter, containing Mr. Spurgeon's sermon on the text, 'Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you.' I read it through with increasing interest as I went along; and it exactly met my case. It aroused me to a sense of my utterly lost condition as a sinner of the deepest dye, and at the same time so encouraged me to seek for mercy and peace at the foot of the cross that I could not resist doing so; and I humbly hope and believe that I did not seek in vain. I left the public-house, resolved never to enter one again unless absolutely compelled by circumstances to do so. Since then I have enjoyed a peace to which I had been long a stranger. I now make God's Word my daily study and attend Divine service whenever I can." The writer added that to his personal knowledge the sermons were read extensively in the country districts of Victoria.

Another correspondent, after stating that he had been in the Colony sixteen years, during which period he had entered a place of worship only about three times, and then more from accident than design, continued, "During my abode in this Colony, I am sorry to say that I have contracted the horrible habit of drunkenness, occasionally getting what some people call 'on the spree' for a fortnight or three weeks at a stretch. The summer before last I had 'the horrors' twice; and last summer I had delirium tremens just coming on. Unable to either sit, stand, lie down or walk about, I casually picked up *The Australasian*, and what should catch my eye but Mr.

Spurgeon's sermon on 'The Approachableness of Jesus.' I commenced reading it; and before I had gone far, tears came into my eyes; and I had not got through it before I had to hold my hand before my face for very shame. By the time I had read it all, I found myself looking to Christ to be relieved from my hideous burden of sin; and to my astonishment the delirium tremens vanished like a heavy dew on a summer's morning. I was weak in consequence of the long drinking-bout, but felt quite happy in my mind; and since, am glad to say that I never enjoyed such peace in my life before." The genuineness of the man's conversion was made evident some years later when Pastor Thomas Spurgeon was in Geelong, for the writer of the letter called upon him, and, exhibiting the torn and discoloured copy of the newspaper containing the sermon, testified to the work of God in his soul.

In addition to the facts that became known through these letters, many other instances of conversion resulting from the novel advertisements were brought to light from time to time. A man, while keeping sheep some miles beyond Ballarat, picked up a sheet of a weekly newspaper that the wind had blown over the plains, and this sheet contained a sermon by C. H. Spurgeon. Had he known that, the man would not have begun to read, but probably the heading of the discourse was torn away, and to pass the time he perused the sheet. The matter interested him, and he read on, until at last a desire was engendered to see how the discourse ended. Then having read once and obtained food for thought, he went through the sermon over and over again and it was the means of leading him to Christ.

Still more remarkable was another case. A publican's wife in England received a parcel from Australia wrapped

in an old newspaper. This contained a sermon by C. H. Spurgeon, and the woman reading it was led to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour.

In America the printed sermons were for a time quite as popular as in England. Besides an enormous circulation of the weekly issues, no fewer than twenty thousand copies of the first annual volume were sold, and in a few years half-a-million volumes, it was calculated, had been purchased. Here the blessings resulting from the reading of the sermons were as marked and as widespread as in Australia. One case may be cited. On July 8th, 1856, C. H. Spurgeon preached in Exeter Hall from the text Hebrews vii. 25, "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." This sermon was published, and more than thirty years afterwards the preacher received tidings that a murderer in South America had been brought to the Saviour through reading it.

"It made me very happy," he says, "when I heard the glad news that a poor condemned murderer had thus been converted and I am thankful to know that he is not the only one who, although he had committed the awful crime of murder had, through the Spirit's blessing upon the printed sermons, been brought to repentance, and to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. There was another man, who had lived a life of drunkenness and unchastity, and who had even shed human blood with his bowie knife and his revolver, yet he, too, found the Saviour, and became a new man; and when he was dying he charged someone who was with him to tell me that one of my discourses had brought him to Christ. 'I shall never see Mr. Spurgeon on earth,' he said, 'but I shall tell the Lord Jesus Christ about him when I get to Heaven.' It was a sermon, read

far away in the backwoods, that, through sovereign grace, was the means of the salvation of this great sinner."

When Charles Haddon Spurgeon in his sermons made references to the burning question of slavery, condemning the sad traffic in humanity, the American sales fell off, and he was greatly abused in the Press of the United States. Scores of violent and insulting letters reached him from the South, but although the loss was considerable and prevented him giving so much financial support to his institutions as he had hitherto done, he did not alter his attitude or change his opinions one iota. After the war the sermons again became popular, in the Northern States at any rate, and their sales gradually increased.

In 1883, an American press syndicate arranged, without any reference to the preacher, to cable on the day of delivery his Sunday morning sermons, omitting the little words. This was done, and after "the little words" had been supplied where they seemed necessary, the cablegrams were published in a number of American newspapers on the Monday. The course pursued, which lasted only a few weeks, was unpleasant for the preacher in two ways. First of all the sermons as published were so garbled, that as he wrote in *The Sword and the Trowel*, "We would not have owned them. In the process of transmission the eggs were broken, and the very life of them was crushed"; and secondly, he was blamed by some for the Sunday labour involved. "So far as this (the cabling) involves Sunday work," he wrote in reply to a correspondent, "I regret it; but I have no more to do with it than you have. I have never been in any way consulted in the matter."

In the Transvaal the sermons circulated very largely, and it was quite usual for translations of them to be seen lying beside the family Bible in the farmsteads of the



The Study at "Westwood."

burghers. The Dutch, too, were amongst the most enthusiastic readers of C. H. Spurgeon, and when quite a young man the preacher had an interview, at her Majesty's own request, with Queen Emma of the Netherlands, who greatly admired his ministry and work.

A number of the sermons were approved and licensed by the heads of the Russian Orthodox Church, and bore on their front cover the official stamp certifying that they might be read and circulated by faithful members of the Church. The permission of the censor to publish the Russian translations of the sermons was obtained by a wealthy gentleman, who at once ordered a million copies to be prepared, and scattered them all over the Czar's dominions. That the discourses of a heretic should be blessed and sanctioned by the officials of the most tyrannous Church of Christendom is surely an inexplicable wonder which must be added to the many marvels of C. H. Spurgeon's marvellous life.

From all parts of the world the preacher was constantly receiving letters telling of blessings received through the printed sermons. Kaffirs in South Africa, and the blacks of the West Indies were converted by their means, whilst in Sweden the converts included the very highest in the land—personages of noble and even royal birth. "Seldom does a day pass," said C. H. Spurgeon, "and certainly never a week, for some years past, without letters from all sorts of places, even at the utmost ends of the earth, declaring the salvation of souls, by means of one or other of the sermons."

At a religious convention in Chicago in 1867 a delegate was present from a newly-formed settlement in the Far West, asking that a missionary might be sent to minister to the Christians there, as through the reading of C. H.

Spurgeon's sermons two hundred people had been converted to God.

One of the most remarkable instances of blessing from a printed sermon was related by the pastor to his congregation at the Tabernacle. At the close of one of his services a poor woman entered the vestry in deep distress and said her husband had left her and fled the country. Seeking for consolation, she entered the Tabernacle, and something the preacher said in his sermon convinced her that he was personally acquainted with her case. Of course, he really knew nothing about her, but had made use of a general illustration which corresponded with her circumstances. After listening to her sad story, C. H. Spurgeon said: "There is nothing that we can do but to kneel down and cry to the Lord for the immediate conversion of your husband." They knelt down and the pastor prayed that God would touch the heart of the deserter, convert his soul, and bring him back to his home. Upon rising from his knees C. H. Spurgeon told the poor woman not to fret about the matter as he felt sure her husband would come home; and that he would yet become connected with the Tabernacle church.

She left, and the incident passed from the preacher's mind. But several months later the woman re-appeared with her neighbours and a man, whom she introduced as her husband. He had indeed come back and had returned a converted man. Charles Haddon Spurgeon made inquiries, and found, to his delight, though not to his astonishment, that the very day on which he had prayed for the erring husband's conversion was the day on which he had been led to see his wickedness. The man was at that time on board a ship, far away at sea, when he came most unexpectedly upon a stray copy of one of C. H.

Spurgeon's sermons. He read it; realised that God was speaking to his conscience, and, repenting, sought the Lord, with the result that as soon as possible he came back to his wife and to his daily calling. The man was afterwards admitted as a member at the Tabernacle, and his wife, who up to that time had not joined the church, was also received into fellowship.

In many of the quaint little chapels up and down the kingdom whose congregations are unable to support a minister, it has long been the custom for a deacon to read one of Spurgeon's printed sermons, whilst, more often than one would think, at the present time, and even in the preacher's lifetime, his sermons have been delivered from the pulpit without acknowledgment. A curious instance of this is recorded by C. H. Spurgeon himself: "I once learnt something," he says, "in a way one does not often get a lesson. I felt at that time very weary, and very sad, and very heavy at heart; and I began to doubt in my own mind whether I really enjoyed the things which I preached to others. It seemed to be a dreadful thing for me to be only a waiter and not a guest at the Gospel feast. I went to a certain country town, and on the Sabbath day entered a Methodist chapel. The man who conducted the service was an engineer; he read the Scriptures and prayed and preached. The tears flowed freely from my eyes; I was moved to the deepest emotion by every sentence of the sermon, and I felt all my difficulty removed, for the Gospel, I saw, was very dear to me and had a wonderful effect upon my own heart. I went to the preacher, and said, 'I thank you very much for that sermon.' He asked me who I was, and when I told him, he looked as red as possible, and he said, 'Why, it was one of your sermons that I preached this morning.' 'Yes,' I said, 'I know it

was ; but that was the very message that I wanted to hear, because I then saw that I did enjoy the very Word I myself preached.' It was happily so arranged in the good Providence of God. Had it been his own sermon it would



Charles Haddon Spurgeon in 1886.

not have answered the purpose nearly so well as when it turned out to be one of mine."

It is not surprising, in view of the widespread circulation of his sermons, that C. H. Spurgeon was in his lifetime perhaps the best known of contemporary Englishmen.

In the secluded glens of the Scottish Highlands, where even the names of Beaconsfield and Gladstone had never been heard, Charles Haddon Spurgeon's sermons were regularly read, and the preacher was held in the very highest esteem.

The story of the beginning of the penny sermons has already been told in an earlier chapter. At first, owing to his many engagements, very little was done in the way of revision, but later on both the reporter's manuscript and the printer's proof were very carefully gone through by the preacher himself. This was no easy task, for oftentimes the sermon would be too short to fill the required number of pages, and then it would have to be expanded, whilst at other times it would be too long and require condensation. It was necessary for the work to be done on Monday, and sometimes when the preacher had an engagement in a distant town on that day he would have to work on Sunday night or get up very early on Monday morning. On one occasion at least, he was found to have been revising the sermon manuscript at 4 a.m.!

What was the secret of the success of the printed sermons? Many a preacher has held the multitude by his eloquence, but when his discourses came to be printed all the life seemed to have gone from them. Far different was it with C. H. Spurgeon's sermons. Even when his matchless oratory and his telling gestures were absent the discourses were so full of original thought and real spiritual help that they were as acceptable as ever, and bore reading again and again. Their power was clearly demonstrated in the silent work they accomplished in all parts of the world, among all kinds of characters, and amid varying circumstances. Even Dr. Livingstone, buried in the dense forests of Central Africa, hundreds of miles from the nearest

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 7TH, 1855, BY
REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"I am the Lord, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."—Malachi. iii. 6.

It has been said by some one that "the proper study of mankind is man." I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. [There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, "Behold, I am wise." But when we come to this master-science, finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought, that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt; and with the solemn exclamation, "I am but of yesterday, and know nothing." No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God. We shall be obliged to feel—

"Great God, how infinite art thou,
What worthless worms are we!"

But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply pines around this narrow globe. He may be a naturalist, boasting of his ability to dissect a beetle, anatomize a fly, or arrange insects and animals in classes with well-nigh unutterable names; he may be a geologist, able to discourse of the megatherium and the plesiosaurus, and all kinds of extinct animals; he may imagine that his science, whatever it is, ennobles and enlarges his mind. I dare say it does; but, after all, the most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity. And, whilst humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently consolatory. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul, so calm the swelling billows of grief and sorrow, so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. It is to that subject that I invite you this morning. We shall present you with one view of it,—that is, the immutability of the glorious Jehovah. "I am," says my text, "Jehovah," (for so it should be translated) "I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

No. 1.

It is a facilitative view,
it walks the ancient plains;
it may be a view of some
the school of

develops the faculties nothing or educates

A facsimile of C. H. Spurgeon's corrected proof of the first sermon published in the long series now known as the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

white man, found comfort in C. H. Spurgeon's sermons. Among the preacher's most treasured possessions was an old discoloured paper—a copy of one of his sermons, entitled, "Accidents and Punishments," which Dr. Livingstone had carried with him in his travels, and on the top of which, in the explorer's handwriting, were the words, "*Very good.*—D. L." It was found, after the traveller's death, in his diary, and was sent to C. H. Spurgeon by Dr. Livingstone's daughter.

The preacher's own explanation of the success of the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit is interesting. "I am more astonished at the fact than any other man can possibly be," he says, "and I see no other reason for it but this—the sermons contain the Gospel, preached in plain language, and this is precisely what multitudes need beyond anything else. The Gospel ever fresh and ever new has held my vast congregation together these many long years, and the same power has kept around me a host of readers. 'Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.' A French farmer, when accused of witchcraft by his neighbours, because his crops were so large, exhibited his industrious sons, his laborious ox, his spade, and his plough as the only witchcraft which he had used, and under the Divine Blessing I can only ascribe the continued acceptance of the sermons to the Gospel which they contain, and the plainness of speech in which the Gospel is uttered."

The popularity continues both of the newly-published sermons and of the older discourses that have been issued in millions for years past. Next year (1904) is the fiftieth year of publication, and every one of the sermons yet issued—nearly three thousand in number—is constantly being reprinted to meet the demand. Complete sets of volumes

are continually being sent to all parts of the world, the purchasers including dignitaries such as Bishops and Deans, and ministers of every denomination. Even High Church clergymen are among the regular subscribers to the sermons.

In the year of C. H. Spurgeon's death, a society, having for its object the circulation of the preacher's sermons, originated at Brighton. The founder was Mr. William Taverner, and for some time he and his mother did the necessary work unaided. Financial help, however, was given, the work spread, and the organization was properly instituted under the name of "The Spurgeon Memorial Sermon Society," with a magazine of its own. Large numbers of the sermons are sold, but many are also lent to readers, and at the headquarters at Greenhithe, near London, the permanent stock on the premises averages over a million copies, while a quarter of a million sermons change hands each week. The society works in all parts of the world, and there is a branch office and depôt in America. The order for a million sermons, once given to Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, was on behalf of this society.

In addition to the discourses which appear in the forty-nine volumes of the "Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit," and in the series of twelve sermons, of which some fifty volumes have already been issued, a number of C. H. Spurgeon's works consist of sermons on special topics and subjects. Among the most notable of these are "Types and Emblems," "Trumpet Calls to Christian Energy," "The Present Truth," "Storm Signals," "Our Lord's Parables," "Our Lord's Miracles," "The Messiah: our Lord's Names, Titles, and Attributes," "Christ in the Old Testament," "The Gospel for the People," and the very excellent series of "Farm Sermons" preached from texts in which

agricultural illustrations are used. Four volumes of "Sermon Notes" have been published, containing outlines of C. H. Spurgeon's discourses, and a very interesting book is "Fac-simile Pulpit Notes," which gives a number of sermons, and with each an exact reproduction of the sheet of paper containing the notes which C. H. Spurgeon took with him into the pulpit, and from which he preached the sermon. The origin of this book was curious. A paragraph appeared in the newspapers to the effect that such a volume was about to appear, although up to that time no undertaking of the kind had been thought of. The idea seemed so good, however, that it was adopted, and "Fac-simile Pulpit Notes" was the result.

A passing reference must be made to Charles Haddon Spurgeon as a hymn-writer. No book of songs for public worship could be found that exactly suited the needs of the Tabernacle congregation, and the Pastor decided to compile a volume of hymns specially for the use of his people. This was completed in 1866, and entitled "Our Own Hymn-Book." It has since been adopted by a large number of congregations all over the country. Included in the selection are several hymns by C. H. Spurgeon himself, and some of these have been copied into other hymn-books. Perhaps the best known are the three commencing, "Sweetly the holy hymn Breaks on the morning air," "Amidst us our Beloved stands," and "The Holy Ghost is here."

CHAPTER XXXII.

LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH.

THE mention of Mentone will always call up memories of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, for it was to that sunniest spot of the sunny Riviera that he went winter by winter, to seek relief from his painful malady, and there he passed away into well-earned rest at a time when it seemed he could ill be spared. For about twenty years the preacher paid an annual visit to the South of France, staying for a few days at this place and a short time at that, but always going for the major portion of the holiday to Mentone, the spot he loved above all others on the Riviera. During the first of these visits to the Mediterranean coast, he spent a day or two at Nice, and the captain of the United States warship *Alabama*, which happened to be lying in Villefranche harbour, invited C. H. Spurgeon to preach on board his vessel to the officers and men. The invitation was accepted, and the visitor declared that he did not remember that he had ever enjoyed preaching more than he did on that occasion. Some years later he was again asked to preach on an American warship, but was prevented from acceding owing to pressure of work. It is significant in view of the courtesy of the American naval officers, that C. H. Spurgeon was never invited to preach aboard a British man-o'-war.

The preacher's heartiness and thoughtfulness for others, even in the midst of illness and convalescence, endeared

him not only to those with whom he came in close contact in the hotels at which he stayed, but with the poor people of the district. On one occasion a man was playing a piano-organ in the gardens of the Hotel des Anglais without getting much recognition from the guests, when C. H. Spurgeon, taking pity upon him, went and turned the handle of the instrument himself. Immediately the people staying in the hotel gathered round or appeared at the windows, and a shower of coins poured upon the man, who gathered up the money while the preacher played. Other guests entered into the spirit of the thing and took their turns at the handle, with the result that the organ-grinder went home richer probably than he had ever been before.

For several years C. H. Spurgeon stayed at the Hotel Beau Rivage, which became quite a centre for persons like-minded with himself. In time the family devotion conducted by the great preacher developed into a service, for not only were there many guests in his own hotel who obtained permission to be present, but a considerable number of people came from hotels and villas in the neighbourhood. It was the custom at the Hotel Beau Rivage for a bell to be rung each evening when the hour arrived at which C. H. Spurgeon usually conducted prayers, a fact which eloquently testifies to the influence he thus quietly exerted on those around him. Every Sunday afternoon a communion service was held in the preacher's private sitting-room, and so many persons were in the habit of attending this gathering that oftentimes the folding-doors had to be opened, so that when the sitting-room was full the meeting might overflow into the adjoining apartment. Many of the beautiful addresses in the volume, "Till He Come," were delivered at these semi-private

communion services. Sunday mornings were usually spent in worship with the Presbyterian friends at Villa les Grottes.

There were no idle moments at Mentone. The correspondence was always great, and to this the preacher invariably insisted upon attending unless prevented by illness. Then the amount of literary work he accomplished during these periods was enormous; and further he was constantly writing home to his church, urging the members to increased zeal and effort, and particularly impressing upon them the importance of maintaining the prayer-meetings at "blood-heat." He never forgot his church, his people, his institutions, or any single branch of his work. "It would be well," he says in one letter, "if I could write without mentioning myself and for your edification only. Forgive the need which there is of alluding to my health; it would best please me if I could work right on and never have the wretched item of self to mention. My mind runs much upon the work at home; the services, the College, the Orphanage, the Colportage, the Sabbath school, the coming special meetings, and so on. I picture all things in my mind's eye and wonder how all are going on; then I pray and leave the whole with '*that great Shepherd of the Sheep*.'" At another time he writes: "I feel grieved to be out of the running, but I cannot help it. I can pray and I do. Rally round your leaders. Pray with double earnestness. Be instant in season and out of season. Attempt great things and expect great things."

During these periods even when encouraging his brethren at home and belittling his own troubles, C. H. Spurgeon was an intense sufferer. The pain of the gout and the rheumatism, very often complicated and rendered more

acute by other diseases, was almost unbearable, and he gave some idea of the agony he endured when describing his sensations to a friend. "If you put your hand into a vice," said C. H. Spurgeon, "and let a man press as hard



(Elliot & Fry, photo, London.)

C. H. Spurgeon in 1890.

as he can, that is rheumatism; if he can be got to press a little harder, that is gout";—a rather humorous way of explaining a sensation which was anything but humorous to the sufferer.

The preacher's health did not improve as time went on. His illnesses became longer and more serious. The gout spread, bringing with it fever and insomnia. In November, 1890, the day after his arrival at Mentone, the complaint



Mrs. C. H. Spurgeon.

seized the patient's right hand and arm, causing him untold agony, yet in the midst of his sufferings he wrote to his wife through his secretary: "The day is like one in Eden before our parents fell. When my head is better I shall

enjoy it. I have *eau de Cologne* dripped on to my hot brain-box ; and, as I have nothing to do but to look out on the perfect scene before me, my case is not a bad one." For eight days the pain was terrific. The arm, the foot, the knee were all attacked, and the seizure of the right hand prevented the patient from holding a pen. Yet when at last he could scrawl a few words with the left hand in a note to his wife, there was no complaint, no repining. "Wished myself at home when pains came," he said, "but when worst, this soft, clear air helps me. It is as heaven's gate. All is well. Thus have I stammered a line or two. Not quite dumb, bless the Lord ! What a good Lord He is ! I shall yet praise Him ! Sleeplessness cannot so embitter the night as to make me fear when He is near." To an aged literary friend who wrote, saying he had been wrestling in prayer on the preacher's behalf, C. H. Spurgeon replied a week or two later : "It made my heart leap for joy when I read in your note that you had liberty in prayer for me. I am recovering. I can hold the pen, as you see. My hand was puffed up, and, in consequence, like all puffed-up things, useless ; but it is coming to its true form, and I am rallying from the weakness which follows great pain. Of a surety it is well. I praise God with all my heart for the furnace, the hammer, and the file. May He bless to you the infirmities of years and carry you ever in His bosom !" Two or three days after this he writes gleefully to his wife : "To-day I dressed myself." But by Christmas his condition was worse, and Mrs. Spurgeon received a letter in which occurred the significant statement : "There is some deep-seated gout in me." The patient had evidently come to the conclusion that his complete recovery was unlikely, although this was the first intimation of any such belief on the part of either

himself or his friends. It was February, 1891, before he was able to return to London, but on the 8th of that month, the first Sunday after his arrival, he occupied his old place at the Tabernacle and preached a powerful sermon upon the necessity of prayer and testimony. His strength, however, had not returned, nor did he seem to improve as the weeks went by. The Pastors' College conference in April, the last at which C. H. Spurgeon was present, was a severe tax upon him in his weakened state, and, as a result of the reaction, a low, nervous condition ensued. So serious was this that when on the following Sunday he entered the pulpit to preach, he was obliged to hurry out of it and another took his place—the first time such a thing had happened in a ministry of forty years. The following Sunday, however, the preacher was at his post both in the morning and in the evening, and for several days following he was fulfilling preaching engagements either at his own church or elsewhere, doing at the same time a certain amount of literary work. But he had overtaxed his strength by all these labours, and on Sunday, May 17th, was unable to occupy his pulpit owing to an attack of congestion of the lungs. Three weeks later he was in the Tabernacle Pulpit, and this occasion (Sunday morning, June 7th, 1891) was the last on which he preached to the congregation he had so wonderfully gathered and held for thirty years. The text was 1 Samuel xxx. 21—25, the statute of David for the sharing of the spoil, and his last words in the Metropolitan Tabernacle were typical of his pulpit ministry throughout the whole of his career. "If you wear the livery of Christ you will find Him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls. He is the most magnanimous of captains. There never was His like among the choicest of princes.

He is always to be found in the thickest part of the battle, when the wind blows cold He always takes the bleak side of the hill. The heaviest end of the cross lies ever on His shoulders. If He bids us carry a burden He carries it also. If there is anything that is gracious, generous, kind, and tender, yea, lavish, superabundant in love, you always find it in Him. His service is life, peace, joy. Oh, that you would enter on it at once! God help you to enlist under the banner of Jesus Christ!"

It was clear to the congregation that the preacher's health was terribly shattered, and as he spoke with all his old earnestness, though with some of the fire gone, there was many a wet eye and not a few seem to have had a premonition of coming calamity. Had it been known that that was Charles Haddon Spurgeon's last appearance in his great church, what a lamentation would have gone up from the assembled multitude.

That week the illness took an alarming turn, and a fatal issue began to be feared. The opening of the Surrey Gardens Memorial Hall, commemorating his early ministry in the great secular building, had been postponed from June 2nd to 23rd in the hope that C. H. Spurgeon might be able to take part in the inauguration, but by the latter date all thought of his presence had, of course, to be abandoned, and the building was opened under the shadow of a cloud.

The church at the Tabernacle began to meet morning, noon, and night, for intercession on behalf of its beloved pastor, and in thousands of churches and chapels throughout the land prayer was offered for the great preacher's recovery. The whole nation watched with anxious concern for some bulletin that should hold out hope, and all denominations seemed united in pleading for this man's

recovery. The Archbishops and Bishops, the dignitaries of St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, and the Chief Rabbi, all publicly prayed that he might be spared. It must have seemed strange to those old enough to remember the abuse and ignominy heaped upon the



(Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)

A painting of Charles Haddon Spurgeon which hung with portraits of his distinguished predecessors in the Pastor's Vestry at the Tabernacle.

preacher in his early days in London. Telegrams, letters, and resolutions of sympathy reached "Westwood" in thousands, and a constant stream of visitors called at the Norwood home to learn something of the patient's condition. The inquirers included the Prince of Wales, the

Primate, many of the Bishops, and a large proportion of the nobility, besides statesmen, men of the learned professions, ministers, and tradesmen, down to what are usually described as "the common people."

By the autumn the patient had sufficiently recovered to be taken for drives in the country, a favourite route being through Addington Park.

After one of these visits the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Benson, wrote a note in which he said, "I was surprised and delighted to see your handwriting, and to see it so firm and clear. I only lamented that as you were actually here it had not been my good fortune to see you. We do earnestly hope that when (and may it be soon!) you are able to leave your carriage and come in, you will do so; or in the middle of your ride let us bring you out a glass of wine or a cup of tea. We know how much you must have suffered, and we have watched your retardations and advances with hearts full of regard and hope. It has been given to you not only to labour for Christ and to bring many souls within the knowledge and feeling of the Atonement; but—it seems to follow with so many of those who have come nearest to Him in that great way to be drawn into closest sympathy with His sufferings—to catch the reality of those mysterious words:—

*καὶ ἀνταναπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλιψεῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ
ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου.**

No doubt there are also some verses in the Psalms which you can now more than ever make your own."

It became evident that the sick pastor would have to winter in the South of France, and after an experimental

* Colossians i. 24: "And fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh."

visit to Eastbourne for a fortnight to see how he could bear the journey and change, he started for Mentone on October 26th, accompanied by his wife, Pastor and Mrs.



C. H. Spurgeon in the gardens of the Hotel Beau Rivage, Mentone.

J. A. Spurgeon, and Mr. Harrald. The preacher's brother and sister-in-law had soon to return to England, and the

party at Mentone was then joined by Miss E. H. Thorne, Mrs. Spurgeon's companion.

The warmth of the southern sun appeared to have a beneficial effect upon the patient's condition, and for a time there were signs of improvement, although he himself seems to have been firmly convinced of the hopeless nature of his complaint. Most of the days were spent in the open-air, driving, or riding in a Bath chair, and the preacher, although so weak, was indefatigable in his literary work. He devoted much time to the exposition of St. Matthew's gospel, and wrote reviews and articles for *The Sword and the Trowel*, but he was unable to continue the series of semi-private services in his rooms which had been so appreciated by guests on previous visits to Mentone. On four occasions only did he conduct such services, the last two being on January 10th and 17th, 1902, when his strength did not enable him to prepare new addresses, and he reluctantly agreed to read portions of an old sermon. The latter of these occasions was the last on which he ever spoke to a company of worshippers on earth, for three days later serious symptoms made their appearance and the great preacher retired to his bed, from which he never again rose. Night and day he had to be nursed and watched, Mrs. Spurgeon and Miss Thorne taking service alternately, while the other members of the party rendered all the help they could, and Dr. FitzHenry was in almost constant attendance. Hopes were still entertained that the patient would recover, but he himself seems to have realized that the end was near. "My work is done," he said to his secretary, in discussing various matters with whom he spoke as though he were soon to be finished with the things of earth. It had been arranged some weeks earlier that on January 26th thankofferings

should be brought to the Tabernacle in recognition of the Pastor's partial recovery, but on that day his condition was so alarming that for a long time he was only semi-conscious. He did not, however, in the midst of pain and weakness, forget his flock and his church, but dictated the following message to be telegraphed to the deacons: "Self and wife, £100, hearty thankoffering towards Taber-



C. H. Spurgeon's Sitting-room at the Hotel Beau Rivage, Mentone, where he conducted private services that were largely attended by visitors.

nacle general expenses, love to all friends." It was Charles Haddon Spurgeon's last public act and message, and was characteristic of his whole life. Shortly afterwards he became totally unconscious, and remained so until just after eleven o'clock on Sunday night, January 31st, 1892, when he passed away in the presence of his wife and a few friends.

It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the whole world was watching the course of events at Mentone. Something of the true worth of this plain-living man, who had never sought the favours of the great or the applause of the multitude, who had always shrunk from notice and popularity save where such were the necessary accompaniments of faithful service for his Master, was now realised; and when it became known that his wonderful career had closed, it was generally felt by men of all schools and shades of thought that the loss was irremediable. Never again would there be a Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Within a short time of the sad news becoming known the telegraph wires at Mentone were blocked with messages of condolence and sympathy. These were from all parts of the world, although naturally the majority came from England. King Edward and Queen Alexandra (then Prince and Princess of Wales) were among the first to express their grief and sympathy, and they were followed by men and women of almost every class and creed.

The French laws did not allow the body to remain long at the hotel, and without delay it was placed in an olive casket, which bore the inscription:—

IN EVER LOVING MEMORY
OF
CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON,
BORN AT KELVEDON, JUNE 19, 1834,
FELL ASLEEP IN JESUS
AT MENTONE, JANUARY 31, 1892.

*"I have fought a good fight; I have finished my
course; I have kept the faith."*

After a memorial service at the Scotch Presbyterian Church, at which the great divine had preached the opening



Charles Haddon Spurgeon's remains arriving at Mentone railway station for removal to England.

sermon about a year before, his remains were removed to England for burial in Norwood Cemetery, where he had often expressed a desire that his body might lie amid those of his departed Tabernacle friends and deacons. The remains reached London on the morning of Monday, February 8th, and were taken direct to the Pastors' College, and there the massive olive casket rested all day. At night it was borne by students into the Tabernacle and placed just below the platform from which for so many years the great preacher had told forth the Gospel to the multitudes who gathered in his church. On either side of the coffin were fixed palm branches, sent specially for this purpose from the South of France by Mrs. Spurgeon, while across the top of the casket lay the Bible which the preacher had used in the Tabernacle pulpit. It was opened at the page bearing the text, Isaiah xlv. 22: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," which had been the means of the great preacher's conversion in the little chapel at Colchester more than forty years earlier.

The next day, Tuesday, the Tabernacle was thrown open to the public, so that those who cared to do so might pass in front of the preacher's remains, and about sixty thousand persons of all classes availed themselves of the opportunity. To each one as he or she left the building was given a copy of C. H. Spurgeon's sermon published in the previous week, entitled, "God's will about the Future."

Wednesday was a day of memorial services. In the morning, members of the church and its various organizations filled the Tabernacle. The afternoon service was for ministers and students of all denominations, and the evening was devoted to Christian workers and church members of the various denominations, the service being presided over by Mr. (now Sir) George Williams, and Mr.

Ira D. Sankey singing the hymn, "Sleep on, beloved, sleep and take thy rest." At the afternoon meeting the speakers included Dr. Alexander McLaren, Canon Fleming, Dr. Monro Gibson (Moderator of the English Presbyterian Synod), Dr. Herber Evans (Chairman of the Congregational Union), Dr. T. B. Stephenson (President of the Wesleyan Conference), and the Rev. F. B. Meyer.

Still another service was held on Wednesday, at ten



The Olive Casket containing C. H. Spurgeon's remains, as it stood in the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

o'clock at night, for the general public. The hour fixed had been 10.30 p.m., but at ten the great building was filled to excess, and the service started then. Mr. Sankey was again present, and sang, "Only remembered by what I have done."

Thursday was the day of the interment. Dr. Pierson, who preached the funeral sermon in the Tabernacle, drew

attention to the fact that Charles Haddon Spurgeon's death had occurred almost exactly a century after that of John Wesley, and then referred to the curious correspondence in the lives of the two brothers, John and Charles Wesley, and those of the two brothers, Charles and James Spurgeon. In each case the two brothers had wrought together as right-hand and left-hand work together in mechanical arts. The posthumous work of John Wesley was greater than the work he did during his life, and as the century was looked back upon, Wesley's name was surrounded with much of the glory of the work carried on after his decease. "The posthumous work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon," said the preacher, "no man can at this day estimate or conjecture;" but his suggested comparison of C. H. Spurgeon with Wesley in this respect has been amply borne out since.

Forty-one carriages followed the hearse to Norwood Cemetery, the first being the empty brougham of the preacher. All along the route the people had gathered in hundreds of thousands, and, as the *cortège* passed, the men bared their heads and women could be seen and heard weeping and sobbing. The shops, even the public-houses, were closed, and many were draped with black; flags floated at half-mast, and the bells of the churches were tolled. At the gates of the cemetery the Bishop of Rochester (the present Primate of All England) entered the carriage of the Rev. James A. Spurgeon, having expressed a desire to pay a parting tribute to the memory of C. H. Spurgeon by being present at the funeral. Immediately round the grave gathered the near relatives of the deceased, then a thousand mourners stood within the barriers that had been erected, and outside thousands of the general public waited silently, while Pastor Archibald Brown conducted the

solemn burial-service. Such a funeral had never been seen in South London before, nor is likely to be seen again.



(Photo by Mr. E. Johnson.)

The place at the back of the Metropolitan Tabernacle where a lift was to be erected for the convenience of C. H. Spurgeon. He died just after the work had been put in hand.

Scarcely an eye was dry, and as Mr. Brown uttered his concluding sentences, everyone present felt that

indeed a great man and a master in Israel had been laid to rest.

None who heard them will ever forget those pathetic yet triumphant words :—

“Beloved President, Faithful Pastor, Prince of Preachers, Brother Beloved, Dear Spurgeon! we bid thee not ‘Farewell,’ but only for a little while, ‘Good-night.’ Thou shalt rise soon at the first dawn of the Resurrection-day of the redeemed. Yet is not the good-night ours to bid, but thine; it is we who linger in the darkness; thou art in God’s holy light. Our night shall soon be passed, and with it all our weeping. Then, with thine, our songs shall greet the morning of a day that knows neither cloud nor close; for there is no night there.

“Hard worker in the field! thy toil is ended. Straight has been the furrow thou hast ploughed. No looking back has marred thy course. Harvests have followed thy patient sowing, and Heaven is already rich with thine ingathered sheaves, and shall be still enriched through years yet lying in eternity.

“Champion of God! thy battle long and nobly fought is over; the sword which clave to thy hand, has dropped at last; a palm branch takes its place. No longer does the helmet press thy brow, oft weary with its surging thoughts of battle, a victor’s wreath from the great Commander’s hand has already proved thy full reward.

“Here for a little while shall rest thy precious dust. Then shall thy Well-Beloved come; and at His voice thou shalt spring from thy couch of earth, fashioned like unto His body, unto glory. Then spirit, soul and body shall magnify thy Lord’s redemption. Until then, beloved,

sleep. We praise God for thee, and by the blood of the everlasting covenant, hope and expect to praise God with thee. Amen."

Dr. Pierson led in prayer and the Bishop of Rochester pronounced the benediction.



C. H. Spurgeon's Monument in Norwood Cemetery.

Thus was the great preacher laid to his final earthly rest. The whole of the memorial services had been characterised by a simplicity which was eminently fitting in the case of one whose personal life had been simple in the extreme, and yet with all its plainness the funeral was such as might

have done honour to a great king. A thousand or more churches, societies, colleges, corporations, school-boards, lodges, hospitals, and leagues sent either deputations to the services and graveside, or letters of condolence and sympathy to the Tabernacle and relatives, and the United States Legation was officially represented.

A simple monument was erected over the vault, bearing in front a medallion of the preacher, the representation of an open Bible on a cushion, and the short inscription :—

HERE LIES THE BODY
OF
CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON
WAITING FOR THE APPEARING OF HIS
LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST.

While on the right-hand side of the tomb were two verses from C. H. Spurgeon's favourite hymn :—

E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die ;

Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy power to save,
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CONCLUSION.

IT is close upon twelve years since Charles Haddon Spurgeon passed away, and his influence shows little sign of weakening. Speaking generally, the ministers trained in his Pastors' College, and believing and teaching the same doctrines as he believed and taught, still have the largest, healthiest and most liberal churches in the country. His sermons sell as largely as ever, and the fact that you can go into many a provincial or colonial church, into many a British or American, Australian or South African home, on board many a vessel, and hear, Sunday after Sunday, one of Spurgeon's printed discourses read as the devotional exercise of the day, clearly proves that the secret of his success did not lay, as was so often stated, in his wonderful voice or his personality. Were that the case, he could not be at the present time, as he undoubtedly is, a living force, nor could it be true in any real sense that "he being dead yet speaketh."

It has always been the fashion in some quarters to describe him as unlettered, a man of scant education, and of scarcely any reading, one who was good enough for the masses but quite beneath the attention of those with any pretence to "culture." Yet he numbered among his close personal friends some of the most learned and refined men of the day, men who delighted in spending hours communing with him, and men who, had these statements about

the lack of education been true, would hardly have found his society and his conversation congenial. Again, it has been the fashion to speak of C. H. Spurgeon as a man of no original thought. But it is astonishing what a number of preachers who pass as "thinkers" find it worth their while and make a practice to get the great Baptist minister's sermons on a particular text or subject before preaching themselves from the same text or subject. These keen students of Spurgeon's sermons are confined to no particular denominations. They include Bishops and other dignitaries of the Established Church, and men of note in the various Non-conformist churches. True, sometimes thoughts and points only are taken and clothed in a new theological dress, but it is within the writer's knowledge that at other times preachers who have received University training and honours have preached a sermon of C. H. Spurgeon's with little or no alteration.

Surely these facts hardly bear out the idea that the preacher was a man of meagre attainments and no original thought. He certainly spoke with great acceptance to costermongers, butchers and sailors, but at the same time he could hold for an hour or more the close attention of City merchants, members of the Stock Exchange, literary men, eminent lawyers and peers of the realm. Why, then, should such palpably erroneous opinions gain currency? The reason we believe to be this. The newspapers and reviews which had so violently abused the preacher were compelled afterwards by force of circumstances to modify their views, and to acknowledge that he was doing good, at any rate, in his own immediate sphere. The value of the Orphanage and the Almshouses could not be gainsaid, even by the bitterest opponent. But the unfriendly critics and journals, save in a few honourable cases, such as the

Daily News and *Daily Telegraph*, were not prepared to own that they had erred, and so they continued to misrepresent the preacher, though in a less violent manner.

In some quarters the wholesale utterance of Greek and Latin quotations in a sermon, and the repetition of extracts from modern authors of a sceptical nature, pass as evidence of the preacher's culture. With such parade of knowledge, C. H. Spurgeon would have nothing to do, and because he never thought it worth his while to make a show of learning some supposed that he had none. A man, however, who could read the Old and New Testaments in the original Hebrew and Greek could hardly be described with accuracy as unlettered. His contempt, too, for the degrees bestowed so liberally upon British ministers by American Universities of questionable standing was very great. "Many times," he once wrote, "we meet in American papers with our own name adorned or disfigured with a doctor's degree. In a periodical we see every month there is an extract from the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, D.D. We like the prefix quite as well as the affix; that is to say, we detest them equally."

The great preacher was no ascetic. He believed in enjoying the good gifts of God, although over and over again he has denied himself for the sake of others. He allowed no man's opinion to influence him, if he felt that what he was doing was not displeasing to his divine Master. This was particularly noticeable in connection with the practice of smoking, which some people thought was wrong or at any rate inadvisable in a man of his position. He made no secret of his attitude in this respect, and when some public utterance of his regarding the use of tobacco was exaggerated out of all proportion with a view of lessening his influence, he wrote to the *Daily Telegraph*:

"I demur altogether and most positively to the statement that to smoke tobacco is in itself a sin. It may become so, as any other indifferent action may, but as an action it is no sin. Together with hundreds of thousands of my fellow-Christians I have smoked, and with them I am under the condemnation of living in habitual sin, if certain accusers are to be believed. As I would not knowingly live even in the smallest violation of the law of God, and sin is the transgression of the law, I will not own to sin, when I am not conscious of it. There is growing up in Society a Pharisaic system which adds to the commands of God the precepts of men; to that system I will not yield for an hour. The preservation of my liberty may bring upon me the upbraidings of many of the good and the sneers of the self-righteous; but I shall endure both with serenity, so long as I feel clear in my conscience before God.

"The expression 'smoking to the glory of God' standing alone has an ill sound, and I do not justify it; but in the sense in which I employed it I still stand to it. No Christian should do anything in which he cannot glorify God—and this may be done, according to Scripture, in eating and drinking and the common actions of life. When I have found intense pain relieved, a weary brain soothed, and calm, refreshing sleep obtained by a cigar, I have felt grateful to God and have blessed His name; this is what I meant, and by no means did I use sacred words triflingly. If through smoking I had wasted an hour of my time, if I had stinted my gifts to the poor, if I had rendered my mind less vigorous, I trust I should see my fault and turn from it; but he who charges me with these things shall have no answer but my forgiveness.

"I am told that my open avowal will lessen my influence,

and my reply is that if I have gained any influence through being thought different from what I am, I have no wish to retain it. I will do nothing upon the sly and nothing about which I have a doubt."

The preacher was never free from censure, and very often received hostile letters of the cruellest kind, but his early training in the London ministry inured him to this, and he could regard with amusement what was intended to give him pain. When a clergyman, for instance, wrote to inform him that the dreadful bodily sufferings caused by the gout were a judgment from God upon him for speaking against the Church of England, and that he would soon have another attack for a recent Liberation Society speech, he replied to his correspondent asking, if a swollen hand or foot were to be regarded as a mark of Divine displeasure, what was to be said concerning a broken neck? A distinguished Anglican prelate, the Bishop of Winchester (Samuel Wilberforce) had not long before fallen from his horse and been killed. No answer was vouchsafed to the question.

Through evil report and good, Charles Haddon Spurgeon pressed toward the mark. The burden of all the Tabernacle agencies was upon his shoulders, but he bore it manfully; the vast literary work entailed by the books and printed sermons might have been another man's life-work, but he did it in his spare moments, and in his periods of convalescence; his services were wanted up and down the country to stimulate effort and revive flagging causes, and he gave them freely; the huge congregation at the Tabernacle had to be maintained, interested, and led on to increased usefulness in the service of God and man; and last, but not least, the careless, the indifferent and the flagrant sinners had to be attracted and drawn under the sound of

the Gospel without the use of any strange or sensational device. On this latter point C. H. Spurgeon was very emphatic. "The chief point," he once wrote, "is to get the people in, not by bribing them with tea, etc., but by fair persuasion." No other man could do Charles Haddon Spurgeon's work nor fill the place that he filled for so many years. His faith removed mountains of difficulty, and his genius, supplemented by his persistent and unquenchable zeal, reared an imperishable edifice in the lives and characters of those who came under his inspiring influence.

It is difficult to say what his place will prove to be in the history of the nineteenth century, when in years to come that history is viewed in a right perspective. There is no doubt, however, that he will rank among the very foremost religious leaders. His influence, we believe, was, and is, far greater than is generally acknowledged. It was the ministry and work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, for instance, that was the greatest barrier to the spread of Bradlaughism and the revolutionary ideas that follow in its train, among the lower middle and working classes, and finally led to its collapse. The most plausible negative arguments were futile in face of the great fact of the man and his message, with the practical outcome of plain Christian teaching witnessed in the various philanthropic institutions that rose around the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The nation owes much to Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He was a man of God in a very special sense, he left not only his native land, but the world at large, far better than he found it, and none can estimate this side of the grave the fruits of his wonderful life and ministry for his Master. May it long be true, as assuredly it must, that—

"HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH."

APPENDIX A.

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, born at Kelvedon, Essex.
June 19, 1834.

Converted at Colchester, January 6, 1850.

Admitted to Church membership at Newmarket, April 4.
1850.

Baptized in the river Lark, at Isleham, May 3, 1850.

Removes from Newmarket to Cambridge, August, 1850.

Becomes Pastor of Waterbeach Baptist Chapel, 1851.

First literary effort, No. 1 of Waterbeach Tracts, published
1853.

Preaches at New Park Street Chapel, London, for the first
time, December, 1853.

Accepts Pastorate of New Park Street Chapel, April, 1854.

First sermon in the "New-Park Street Pulpit," published
January, 1855.

Earliest attack in the Press appears in *The Earthen Vessel*.
January, 1855.

First preaches at Exeter Hall, February, 1855.

Mr. T. W. Medhurst becomes C. H. Spurgeon's first
ministerial student, July, 1855.

Visits Scotland for the first time, July, 1855.

Marries Miss Susannah Thompson, January 8, 1856.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Building Committee formed, June,
1856.

Twin sons Thomas and Charles born, September 20, 1856.

Surrey Gardens Music Hall Disaster, October 19, 1856.

Services recommenced at the Music Hall, November 23, 1856.

A second student accepted by C. H. Spurgeon and the
Pastors' College practically founded, 1857.

Preaches to 23,654 persons at the Crystal Palace on Fast
Day, October 7, 1857.

First visit to Ireland, August, 1858.

494 LIFE OF CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON.

Foundation Stone of the Metropolitan Tabernacle laid,
August 16, 1859.

Last service at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, December 11,
1859.

Visits Paris and is eulogised in the Roman Catholic Press of
that city, February, 1860.

Preaches in Calvin's gown and pulpit at Geneva, 1860.

Metropolitan Tabernacle opened with a great prayer meeting,
March 18, 1861.

First communion service at the Tabernacle, April 7, 1861.

Delivery of the "Gorilla" Lecture, October, 1861.

The famous "Baptismal Regeneration" sermon preached,
June 5, 1862.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Colportage Association founded,
1866.

Sunday services, each attended by 20,000 persons, held at
the Agricultural Hall, Islington, during the renovation
of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, March 24 to April 21,
1867.

Stockwell Orphanage (Boys' side) founded, 1867.

The Rev. James Spurgeon appointed assistant Pastor at the
Tabernacle, January 6, 1868.

Foundation Stone of the Pastors' College Building laid,
October 14, 1873.

Mrs. Spurgeon's Book Fund inaugurated, 1875.

Girls' Orphanage founded, 1879.

Presentation of the Pastoral "Silver Wedding" gift of
£6,476 9s., May 20, 1879.

The preacher removes from Clapham to "Westwood,"
Norwood, 1880.

Jubilee Celebrations and presentation of testimonial (£4,500),
June 18 and 19, 1884.

First "Down-grade" paper published in *The Sword and the
Trowel*, August, 1887.

Withdrawal from the Baptist Union, October, 1887.

Last sermon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, June 7, 1891.

Goes to Mentone for the last time, October 26, 1891.

Takes to his bed finally, January 20, 1892.

Passes away, January 31, 1892.

Interred at Norwood Cemetery, February, 11, 1892.

APPENDIX B.

The following table shows the number of members baptized and received into the church worshipping at New Park Street Chapel and the Metropolitan Tabernacle under the pastorate of Charles Haddon Spurgeon:—

Number of members at New Park Street						
previous to 1854	...	...	...	...	...	232
Added in 1854	...	...	...	...	...	121
„ 1855	...	...	...	...	...	242
„ 1856	...	..	...	...	...	279
„ 1857	...	...	...	...	...	216
„ 1858	...	...	...	...	...	231
„ 1859	..	...	...	...	...	217
„ 1860	..	...	...	...	...	207
„ 1861	...	...	...	...	...	431
„ 1862	...	...	...	...	...	463
„ 1863	...	...	...	...	...	427
„ 1864	...	...	...	...	...	486
„ 1865	...	...	...	...	...	497
„ 1866	...	...	...	...	...	477
„ 1867	...	...	...	...	...	413
„ 1868	...	..	...	..	...	452
„ 1869	...	...	...	...	...	451
„ 1870	...	...	...	...	...	409
„ 1871	...	...	...	...	...	312
„ 1872	...	...	...	...	...	571
„ 1873	...	...	...	...	...	359
„ 1874	...	...	...	...	...	509
„ 1875	...	...	...	...	...	510

Added in 1876	...	...	...	...	...	474
„ 1877	...	...	...	...	...	437
„ 1878	...	...	...	...	...	394
„ 1879	...	...	...	...	...	445
„ 1880	...	...	...	...	...	453
„ 1881	...	...	...	...	...	382
„ 1882	...	...	...	...	...	444
„ 1883	...	...	...	...	...	449
„ 1884	...	...	...	...	...	426
„ 1885	...	...	...	...	...	353
„ 1886	...	...	...	...	...	418
„ 1887	...	...	...	...	...	357
„ 1888	...	...	...	...	...	307
„ 1889	...	...	...	...	...	433
„ 1890	...	...	...	...	...	379
„ 1891	...	...	...	...	...	261
Total added in C. H. Spurgeon's pastorate						<u>14,692</u>

Average number of members baptized and
added to the church each year from 1854
to 1891 387

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